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M E M M O

**JOSEPH SPENCER
KENNARD**

MEMMO

BY

JOSEPH SPENCER KENNARD



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

1920

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TO
GIUSEPPE EMMANUELE MODIGLIANI
MEMBER OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT

8-27/58



MEMMO



MEMMO

CHAPTER I

LIKE a flight of wild sea mews, fluttering over deep waters, the sunbeams glanced and danced on Canale Grande. Gondolas, black, solemn and stately, glided along the green tide toward the marble landing of Palazzo Sparnieri; the breeze sang softly, oars dripped in crystal cadence, and tiny waves lapped against the marble steps.

Out of their dainty "capitonnees" felze, ladies alighted on oriental carpets, that almost dipped their fringes into the water, outside the historic bronze gates. Some of the proudest families inscribed in the Venetian libro d'Oro had accepted the invitation of the upstart Sparnieri.

Contessa Miravelli D'Abbia, wife of the Prefetto, stood hesitating at the foot of the stairs. She smiled as she saw two red-sashed gondolieri, each bearing on his left arm the embroidered escutcheon of the Della Penna.

"Marchesa carissima! You are a godsend! Do allow me to go in under your wing. I'm no match for Sara Sparnieri. She stifles me!"

"Nonsense! If you did not like it, you would not

come. What cowards we all are; cringing before these Jews, whom we despise."

The footman held up the heavy drapery of the drawing-room door and the two women entered the Sala degli Arazzi.

"Dio mio! Look at the velvet gown and lace flounces."

"Thrift, Isabella! Thrift! Sara will soon wear mourning for old Mose so she wears out her evening gowns at afternoon teas."

Sara Sparnieri, glittering with diamonds, approached beaming.

"Delighted to see you, Marchesa! And you, Contessa!"

"You, Marchesa, you take your tea with a little sugar; and you, Contessa? And a drop of maraschino? Do try these rahtalocums. They come direct from Smyrna this very morning."

"Confess now," said the Marchesa, as Sara left them to welcome another guest, "that Sara has one of the best managed houses in Venice. Well trained servants, well kept apartment, and all ancient and artistic objects are in plain sight."

"A shopkeeper's show window," lisped Contessa D'Abbia.

She lowered her voice. "I expect Daniele Sparnieri to push Augusto into some good place. You know he has a finger in every banking house in Venice."

The Marchesa tapped her fan viciously. "After all why should not Augusto pick out some wealthy

Jewess to gild his impoverished escutcheon. They sometimes make respectable wives. Congratulations on your future daughter-in-law!"

"O Benedeta la tasa! What a horrid suggestion!" exclaimed Contessa D'Abbia, fanning herself violently.

Marchesa Della Penna smiled maliciously and continued.

"I noticed Sara's daughter at the concert. A pretty creature, slim and dark-eyed, serious face and much self possession. She is old enough to be brought out . . . ripe for her market!"

"She is being educated at the Istituto Materno in Florence."

Marchesa Della Penna laughed. "Now, Isabella, don't be too innocent! You know why the girl is kept out of the way."

"Why don't Daniele and Sara marry?" whispered Contessa D'Abbia.

"Why? Because Sara's husband is living! Raving mad in an asylum."

"No, not raving mad. Only silly."

"He was a fool. I remember him wandering about their old shop in San Fantino. His poor mother died two years later, after repenting of her match-making."

The gay Venetian crowd talked softly.

"Your 'at home' is such a success, Sara," exclaimed a fat overdressed woman of the Venetian ghetto. "You are entertaining a Della Penna, a D'Abbia, and a Conte d'Alnieri."

"The D'Abbias have pecuniary embarrassments," said Sara, "and Della Penna hopes to find something to criticise. D'Alnieri, of course, is in attendance."

"What a pity, that you must give up your afternoon receptions."

"How is dear old Mose to-day!"

"Not much worse, though there have been warning symptoms."

"Poor dear Sara," sighed a sallow-cheeked brunette. "You may have to go into deep mourning at a moment's notice. Luckily your complexion can stand black—at least glossy black."

"I shan't overdo it," whispered Sara, "I am only his daughter-in-law."

"Of course, and you can wear furs and even silks; yet for the ceremonies of the avel you must act as though you were of his blood. I pity you, Sara; that tearing of one's clothes, that sitting down at meals on the mattress of the dead relative, are awful practices."

"Those things only last a week," said another woman sympathetically, "but the daily attendance at morning prayers, and the mourning restrictions last for a year."

With a smile and a sigh Sara passed to the other end of the room. She acknowledged the compliments of each departing guest, answered the protestations of devotions, the reiterated thanks that accompany every Venetian leave-taking.

When Sara's last visitor had departed she entered her own sitting room. An aged servant followed,

carrying an olive oil lamp which he set on a table in a corner.

"Give me the matches, Jacob, then tell Nane to light the other lamps. Is the bank closed? Is Signor Daniele at home?"

"The clerks are gone, and Signor Daniele has just come upstairs and asked whether you were disengaged."

"Let him know that I am here, Jacob."

Sara lit the Sabbath lamp, whispering the ritual prayers; then she sank into a lounge chair to enjoy the happiest hour of her day. Her housekeeping, her social obligations, and her religious task had been performed. No food had been stolen from the kitchen, no negligence overlooked, no extravagance had escaped her reproof; and her reception had been a social success, adding a lustre to the Sparnieri name, a new irritation to those visitors who came to find fault. Her account with the world and with Divinity was settled, and Sara was happy and proud.

She inspected her face in a little mirror. At the corner of her lip a tiny wrinkle and a slight redness round her nostril, but when she held the mirror further away and took a general view she smiled complacently. Mature, yes! And somewhat stout! But still beautiful. Her eyes hardly required that pencilling of kohol to enhance their lustre, nor her cheeks that poudre de riz; few women could display so beautiful a throat, so white a neck. She was still lovable! Her eye flashed, her heart throbbed, as she heard well-known footsteps.

Daniele Sparnieri entered scowling. His wolfish teeth glistened between thick lips as if he hated the beautiful, passionate woman who was there.

"I wonder, Sara, if you will ever understand my commands?"

Sara looked up dismayed.

"I find that Clara was to go out walking with her cousin."

"No! Not with Memmo. She was going to the gardens, and he to the Lido. Besides, Clara was under the escort of your trusted Maria."

"That was a still worse blunder. You know Maria must never leave Mose."

Sara's eyes filled with tears. "You make so much of Maria."

"Maria is the soul of devotion."

"Yes! To you."

"You or me, Sara, is it not the same thing?" He rested his hand on hers and she brightened under the contact. "Understand, Sara, this moment is decisive, the slightest mistake might ruin the plans that I have patiently elaborated for you and for myself."

"For me, Dan? Whatever happens there will be enough for me. I care for other things, carissimo, than for money. We have been happy in days of poverty, Dan, you and I."

"We were young then and foolish. That page of our lives is finished. It was not to slip back to the starting point that you married a fool, and that I have toiled for so many years. We have not

climbed to the top round of the ladder just to slide down for want of a little prudence and common sense."

Daniele spoke half to himself.

"I was an errand boy in the same counting house where I am now the master; I knew poverty and hunger, and now the proudest in Venice fawn upon me. Shall I hand over everything to that boy? Never! The world is not large enough to contain us both."

"Memmo has no feeling against you, Dan!"

"But I hate him. He is a dangerous man. He is always speaking of 'justice,' yet he would turn us out of the house and take the money which he has not earned, and could not keep."

Daniele's sallow cheek flushed and his sunken eye gleamed, "It is war to the knife between us. This is but the first round! Hai Adonai! I'll die or kill!" He pressed his lips, his twisted fingers cracked at the joints. "What was the date of Umberto's marriage?"

"I heard of this marriage through old Abigail. He was married at Mehidia, near Tunis. His bride, Maya Deleani, could hardly speak Italian."

"The date?"

"It was in 1874, and a fortnight before Roshhoshannah; the young pair were expected in Venice ten days later, for Kippur, but a telegram came announcing Umberto's death."

"You are quite sure the year was 1874?"

"Quite sure."

"Did he go to Tunis after his marriage?"

"I do not remember. He certainly was buried in Tunis. What can it matter after so many years."

"Matter! Everything! In the year 1874 the international treaties repealed the right of Jewish Communities to administer civilly their congregations. A marriage deed had to be registered at the Italian Consulate to be valid. Umberto may have overlooked the fact; the Deleanis probably did not know that the old customs had been abrogated."

"Do you mean that Umberto's marriage may be proved illegal? Then, of course, Memmo is an illegitimate son?"

"Hush," Daniele whispered. "Let not the air catch your words. The old man upstairs is not dead yet! Time enough for him to ruin everything! Bar Minam!"¹

"How can he? Inimah scemo vegikro!"²

"God preserve us! There are many ways! If his attention has been called to the matter, he may have recognized his legitimacy. Hai Adonai! But one word to his lawyer, but one addition to his will——"

"But he has no misgiving."

"There's no knowing. He is a sly fox and knows the law; loves the boy, and does not trust me."

"Trust you? Why he has made you the trustee for Memmo and the guardian of Clara!"

"The more fool he, knowing that I detest

¹God save us!

²May his name and memory be lost.

Memmo. Don't you see? I justify my firmness before the law in defending the interest of my wards."

"You must remember Clara's affection for her cousin, and her wilfulness, which she takes—after you."

"Yes," said Daniele, moodily. "That is the stumbling block, but other stumbling blocks have been removed."

CHAPTER II

DINNER was over; the light pouring from an antique Venetian lampada glittered on the coffee cups, decanters, and glasses, when a servant opening the door announced "Professor Bendolfi," and a little wizened shabby old man walked briskly up to the table.

"Shabbath Shalom to you all! The peace of this sanctified night be on your household, my dear friends."

He bowed to Sara, shook Daniele's hand, patted Clara's head, and laid his hand on Memmo's shoulder, and waited for the chair a servant was bringing him.

"I did not expect to find you still here, Memmo. I thought you would be in Rome by this time. When are you going for your final examinations?"

As Memmo turned and looked at the old Rabbi, the expression on both their faces revealed confidence and affection.

"If I am to take my degree this year I must leave to-night. The question is whether I am going to take it at all."

"Not going to take your degree!" exclaimed Clara.

Memmo sighed, "If I am not in Rome before

noon, the last moment for matriculation of candidates, I will have to wait another year to become a Professore and yet I hesitate.

"It is just this way: If I do not leave to-night, I lose my opportunity for this year, yet my grandfather is dying and he may ask for me at any minute. Doctor Caffi would not let me go in to-day, saying that the emotion might prove fatal. I may stay here and wait in vain for one instant of consciousness; yet if I go I may regret having been called by him with his last breath, and not being here to answer the call."

Bendolfi glanced alternately at Daniele and Sara, fidgeted in his chair, pulled out a bandana handkerchief and rubbed his head with it, then he spoke solemnly.

"Even if your saintly grandfather were to be called away during your absence his spirit would know that you had obeyed your sense of duty in leaving to-night"—he sighed, bowed his head in prayer, then added softly, "Perhaps even now, while his body is struggling against the angel of death, his spiritualized soul is hovering around us."

Bendolfi blew his nose loudly, looked interrogatively at Daniele and Sara, then continued:

"Whatever the doctors may have said, experience tells us that sudden changes are not likely to happen in a patient of your grandfather's age. Even now, as we speak, Divine Mercy may be working in him and preparing his recovery to health, but—if—if the solemn hour is approaching, some alarming

symptoms would have warned us. This, I am happy to understand, is not the case."

"Not in the least," said Daniele. "When I went up a moment ago, he spoke quite sensibly about business."

"Why then can he not see Memmo?" asked Clara.

"Because he has been seeing me every day, and my coming and going are of no importance to him, while he has not seen Memmo for three months, and will certainly be much affected by the meeting. This, at least, is Doctor Caffi's opinion."

Bendolfi urged his point. "You certainly can rely on your friends here to wire for you immediately, if there is a change."

Daniele stared at his glass, his chin propped on the tips of his long fingers.

"I hate meddling with other people's affairs," he said slowly, "yet in your case, I feel bound to. There is no telling when a man may need to earn his own bread. Your previous studies would not bring in a penny, unless you have your diploma. Had you followed the calling of your family you might, long since, have been rich. You had better not undervalue now the advantages of a liberal profession, since it is your only stock-in-trade."

Memmo flushed. "Do I understand that you are all of the opinion that I ought to leave to-night?"

"That is to say, at once," corrected Bendolfi, pulling out his big silver watch. "You must catch the express train that leaves at ten."

"Then I must be off. Don't trouble about order."

ing the gondola, Aunt Sara; I'll take one at the traghetto."

He nodded to Daniele, grasped Bendolfi's hand, and looked at Clara, who gave a little nod and smile of understanding.

A few minutes later Clara tried to slip from the room, but Daniele linked his arm in hers and exclaimed:

"Come, Clara, some music! Here is Bendolfi dying to hear you."

"Rabbi Bendolfi objects to my playing the piano on Sabbath night."

"Now don't try and play your tricks on me!" exclaimed Daniele gaily. "Bendolfi is no bigot, and he longs to hear you sing."

"Indeed I do," said Bendolfi, following Daniele and Clara into the drawing room, "because I feel sure that it is no infringement of the Law."

"I see your point, Rabbi," said Daniele. "I remember the interpretation given by your learned brethren at Talmud Thora."

"Rhetorical pedantry! My learned brethren fail to comprehend the spirit and they dispute about the letter! I pray God Almighty to lend me His light that I may feel the spirit of His word, and when I read the Scripture under His inspiration I find not only in the Bible but even in the sterner Mischnah that Joy is a form of worship, because Joy is a divine gift. Renunciation, humility, were unknown feelings to our patriarchs; doubt and despondency were sinful, and so, too, was hypocrisy."

Bendolfi perceived the annoyance on Clara's face, though he failed to interpret its cause.

"Come, my pretty one, look up and we will rejoice; sing and you will, like the cherubim, have offered homage to your Maker. Let me hear that Ave Maria of Cherubini."

"Worse and worse, Rabbi," laughed Daniele. "Here you are calling for profane music!"

"Profane! A thing of beauty is never profane. The best offering we can at any time render to Divinity is the rapture of our soul. The Greeks had a word for that sublime trance, Katarsi. At best the praise of the Christian Venus is not worse than the doggerel opera poems, or the nonsense of drawing-room romances."

Clara had no choice but to comply, and she ran her fingers over the keys. After the first liquid notes of the opening phrase her voice rose higher, into a flood of music. Her face was radiant with emotion. The long drawn last note had hardly died away, when Daniele asked for another song.

"Now something for me. That air from Pasiello you sang last night. You could hardly believe it, Rabbi. She has truly mastered the virtuosity of this exquisite concert-piece. Here is the score for you, Rabbi. I know you like to follow."

"Se Lindoro e a me fedele," read the Rabbi with a beaming look. "In my time it was never attempted except by those sure of their powers. Why, child! Your teachers allow you to aim high."

Clara blushed. Bendolfi marked the time, his

eyes beaming. As the harmony proceeded fluent and silvery, Daniele gazed on the double image in the mirror above the piano. Under his own sallow, clear cut features, which an habitual tightening of the lips and a half shutting of the bold eyes made so characteristic of craft and power, was the rosy cheek, the high bridged nose of Clara; a delicate and pure Oriental type. His experienced eye detected between them a resemblance that was for him a revelation. Could his fondest desire have been realized? Unconsciously he turned to Sara, sitting attentive to his looks. She smiled a fearless confirmation to the unspoken question and lifted her hand as if she would have taken a sacred oath.

Daniele's heart swelled with paternal pride. The two heads, were indeed alike. How like his own that aquiline nose, that firm chin. The difference was in the wrinkles, in the deep lines, in the stigmata which a hard life and bitter thoughts had carved, like scars.

And whence came the musical talent Clara displayed. Not from the commonplace mother! Not from the lunatic, putative father. Yes, Sara had spoken the truth when she had entreated her lover not to force upon her the imbecile husband she abhorred! Yes, she had been sincere when she had trembled and quaked with the fear of exposure! He had been wrong to shrug his shoulders in contempt for her lies.

"Brava! Bravissima!" exclaimed Bendolfi as the song ended in a final dropping of silvery notes.

"You have a splendid voice, you also have the soul of an artist."

The noise of a gondola grating along the landing sent Clara rushing to the balcony, "Ola, Memmo! Buon viaggio! Be sure you bring back a sheaf of laurels; Goodbye, Memmo!"

Memmo looked up at her as she bent over the monumental balustrade. Was it fog rising over the Canale or some presentiment that made it appear so pale and shadowy? Was it only the violet vapor and the grayish sheen of the waters that made Memmo's face seem so pale and distant to Clara? Why did that gondola float away so strangely, as if it were urged by some fatal power, as if it were drifting away, away, into unfathomable distance, unknown abyss!

"Goodbye, Memmo."

Clara's voice sounded hoarse and muffled. Nor had Memmo any hopeful answer ready for her. He felt the sadness of this parting, and the burden of some vague threat weighing down his spirit, and choking all words.

He had had no tender leave-taking from either of the two beings he most loved. He had not bent over the sick bed of Mose, the dear grandfather who had been father and mother to him! He had not whispered to Clara the decisive words, nor heard the answer that would have been like a viaticum to speed him on his journey!

Heavily the oars plunged into the still waters; slowly the gondoliere rowed onward, while Memmo

waved his hand to Clara, in speechless adieu, and she kissed her hand to him with a heavy sob in her throat.

CHAPTER III

WITHOUT, the silence mysterious of the Venetian night; within the palace, the ghostly silence of hovering death; Daniele Sparnieri glided along the passage. He lifted the heavy curtain, and peered into the room where old Mose lay dying. Through the gloom a small shaded lamp threw a yellow light on the ghastly face. Mose moaned piteously, his skinny hands fitfully picking the coverlet as if trying to clutch some invisible object.

At the foot of the bed, on a low seat, sat a woman in the shadow, elbows on knees, her face hidden between her hands. As Daniele entered Maria rose and spoke softly:

"Master! Dear master! I feared you would not come to-night."

Maria thrilled as Daniele laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Do you notice any change?"

"He was very restless early in the evening, and Doctor Caffi said he might see the lawyer and get the weight off his mind which is killing him."

His fingers crushing Maria's arm, Daniele hissed,

"Do you mean that Caffi will allow Mose to ask legal advice?"

His fingers crushed Maria's arm.

"Listen, Maria! This interview must be prevented!"

The ashen face on the pillow moved painfully, the shrunken mouth mumbled words of prayer. Daniele bent over to hear the broken words.

"He knows he is dying. He strives to say 'vidui.' " Then aloud, "How are you feeling, Nonno?"

"Very low, my boy! Very low." Mose stared about him. "What o'clock is it, Dan? Why are you not in bed?"

The old man drifted into restless slumber and piteous moaning. Presently he stared affrighted.

"Is it morning? Why don't you send for Don Ghomer? I must see him—Doctor says I can."

"It is night, Nonno. Time enough in the morning."

"Time enough—time enough, who can tell?" He moaned and groped with his hands, his breath hissed painfully. He looked up at Daniele imploringly. "You know me, Dan. You know I always tried to act for the best of my family. I would not have one of my kin wronged."

"Can I help you in any way?" Daniele suggested softly.

Mose's toothless jaws moved and his lips mumbled.

"Yes, you may—but I fear——"

The dying man checked himself.

"You are terribly clever and shrewd—I must trust you, Dan—I have to trust you—are you not the natural guardian of my sons—my two sons; the one

that is dead. Alas—and the one that is left behind—Kadosh Barouhou be blessed for what he gave, and for what he took away.”

There was silence; except for the gasping of the dying man.

“Give me my prayer book,” he whispered. A well used book of Tefilah was lying under his hand.

“Swear! Swear that you will see justice done.”

Mose peered into that impassive face, striving to read his soul. Daniele bent and smacked his lips over the book, but he did not touch it with either hand or mouth.

“There! Are you satisfied?”

Mose Sparniere sighed relieved.

“What troubles you, Nonno?”

Mose whispered, “I want to show Don Ghomer the marriage certificate of Umberto and to ask him whether it is all right.”

Behind his back Daniele’s hands twisted with rage. “Where do you keep the certificate?” he asked softly.

Even now, though dazed, old Mose feared to show this deed; even now he recoiled from those hypnotizing eyes, burning with hate.

“In my private safe—the left hand drawer,” the words came as from one in a trance.

Daniele whispered to Maria, “Where does he keep his keys?”

“Under his pillow.”

He slipped his hand under the old man’s head.

"I'm going to give you some stimulant, Nonno, so that you may speak with Don Ghomer."

Maria followed him to the table, where a row of medicine bottles shone under the lamp.

"No, master. That is the narcotic; the doctors say it might stop his weak heart altogether."

Daniele glared at her, then said, "Look for my diamond ring. It has flipped from my finger; close to the bedside."

He walked up to Mose who drank from the spoon. Maria stood in silent terror reading Daniele's face.

From without no sound but the distant chiming of bells and the swirl of waters, lapping the foot of the palace walls. Mose fell into heavy sleep. His laboring breath grew shorter, his features relaxed. Daniele's finger cautiously felt for the weak pulse. He whispered:

"Take the keys."

But the helpless form lay heavily on the pile of cushions. Then Daniele gently lifted Mose's shoulder and Maria grasped the bundle of keys that tinkled softly.

Daniele laid the old man back and then walked toward the closet holding the safe. Daniele was puzzled by the strange devices that concealed the hidden spring. With shaking hand he pulled at projecting ornaments, pressed some knobs. The panel did not move, no opening appeared. Cold drops stood on his brow, he trembled and panted. He stared at the form on the bed. The murderous

anodyne was at work. Mose's face was livid, the death sweat was on his brow, his breathing almost imperceptible. With a curse, Daniele turned back to the safe. The marriage certificate was there and to-morrow a Magistrate would have the iron coffer forced open in the present of witnesses! O God! With his own hands he had given the drug which had destroyed his last chance of extracting the secret. Once more with palsied hands he pressed and pulled at different knobs and mouldings. In vain!

He vainly tried again with more method. A church steeple chimed the hours and was answered by distant chimes. A footstep glided along the passage, a door turned on its hinges. The first servants were rising to their early tasks.

Giddiness stole over Daniele. He panted heavily. Suddenly, with a clang, the front slab slid down, revealing the key-hole; and the key turned in its lock and the door opened.

"The left hand drawer!"

On vellum, rolled like a sacred scroll, the ketouba, written in faded ink in the rashi characters! Daniele's heart leaped with joy; no official signature, no government stamp was attached! Oh, this might be left where it was; Memmo would be none the richer for it.

Daniele again thrust his hand into the drawer, and there was the marriage certificate duly stamped by the Italian Consulate, regularly witnessed and legalized.

An exclamation broke from his lips! This certificate destroyed and Memmo would be reduced to beggary and his daughter be the richest heiress in Italy. O the splendid crowning of a prosperous career! His daughter rich beyond dreams and Memmo an exile, nameless and dishonored!

A cry from the next room, the crash of a glass overturned and Maria's voice calling! Daniele sprang from the closet to find that Mose had half risen from his bed, was staring wildly toward him and the open safe. His arms beat the air, a bloody foam frothed from his mouth with a gurgling moan.

"Robber!—Thief!—Help!" cried the old man, wrestling against Maria's hands.

"Take this paper, Maria—burn it! Quick! Leave him to me. Quiet, Nonno! Lie down, damn you."

With horror and terror the dying man struggled to pull away the pillow pressed against his mouth; he writhed in the iron grasp. He almost slipped off the bed; one foot was on the floor. Daniele, passing his arm around the panting breast, held him with both hands. He made a deadly band of his long fingers. The weak heart fluttered. Mose struggled and moaned, he strove to drag away those iron fingers! Daniele crushed tighter, pressed harder; he watched the swelling veins, the rolling eyeballs, the clammy drops of sweat! He cursed the old man for holding on so long. O, for one clutch at that throbbing throat, one twist that would end him!

But no trace must be left.

Steadily the hands pressed the panting heart, and the film thickened over the eyes and the heart throbs weakened. Then from the depth of his soul arose instinctive craving for supernatural sanction that should condone the deed without a name. At the moment when his hands were destroying life, from the impure lips of the murderer, came the ritual words of the morning prayer that proclaim the everlasting covenant between Israel and Adonai! "Schemang Israel," he repeated solemnly. The dying one writhed once more. "Adonai Elohenou," he uttered clearly, and then as after one last spasm, the struggling body stiffened he added in reverent tone, "Adonai Ehrahd."

Without interrupting his prayer he composed the cold limbs in decent attitude; he smoothed the pillows, arranged the bedclothes; he closed the eyes that still stared with the terror of this last horror. Still the words of prayer fell from his lips, imploring mercy for the departing soul, appealing to the Almighty, the Avenger of Israel, the King of His chosen people!

A ray of daylight, filtered through the blinds, Daniele turned and saw Maria crouching at his feet. He put his hand on her shoulder.

"Listen to me, Maria. This night's work binds us together so that we can never be parted. Henceforth, you are mine and I will never leave you or our child."

Maria slowly rose from the ground and clung to him passionately.

"Let me stay with you forever!" she whispered. "Protect me from Vigo."

He kissed her brow as a seal of the solemn pledge and whispered, "As you have stood by me in this hour of need so will I stand by you forever! Wait another hour; then call as if you had discovered that he died in his sleep. Say that you fell asleep in your chair. Be brave, cara."

With silent step Daniele glided from the death chamber into his own room at the end of the passage, undressed and got into bed. But the couch burned, a horror crept on him, he wrapped round him his zimarra. Through a secret door he passed along a narrow passage to another room.

CHAPTER IV

CLARA had been stunned and dismayed by her grandfather's death. She was left to face alone this her first experience of the great mystery. But Nonno had been so long ailing, that the blow was softened. Yet questionings would arise. She shivered as she pondered the mystery of this abrupt disappearance of a being she had loved. Was she unselfishly mourning her grandfather, or was she grieved for her own personal loss through his death?

With shame, she realized that the selfish feeling was paramount. Nonno's affection, the protection of his authority, had been one of those blessings which are taken for granted. Thanks to her grandfather, her childhood had not been utterly joyless and solitary.

Nonno, though stern by nature had understood Clara better than her mother. There was a common affection for Memmo and a mutual distrust of Daniele. Nonno was the only member of the family who loved both Memmo and herself with the same affection, who had insisted on their being brought up together, and had encouraged their childish tenderness for one another. Mose's unquestioned authority had baffled all Sara's intrigues to keep the children apart.

The old man, wrapped in a fur pelisse all the year round, always wearing thick half-gloves on his hands, which he continually rubbed in attempts to conquer the chill of age, had never been impatient, never given a curt answer to her childish prattle.

Clara tenderly remembered how Nonno had opposed her being sent to Florence to the Istituto Materno. She recalled his saying to Sara with bitterness, "In my time, girls had not to go so far for maternal care; they nestled under their mother's wings, and were never sent to school among the sohim."

During the holidays he used to question her; "Is there anything you want, Piccina? Are those gohin nice to you? Mind, if they are not, if they presume to be sonshim, I will not let you go back to them even for a day. They can go to rharefod, for what I care. Above everything, child, never allow them to entice you from your religion; stick to the precepts of the Thora."

Clara now realized the greatness of her loss, but she was not long dismayed, because the thought of Memmo and the Dea brought with it a consolation. Doubtless he had been summoned at once; he might arrive at any moment. The mere prospect of his return dispelled her sadness.

As a baby, neglected and often repulsed by her mother, uncared for by servants, she would run for comfort to her cousin, and with him forget all her trouble.

In the succeeding years, when Sara had considered

her own child a burden and had neglected the orphan boy; and later, when the recall of Daniele from the Constantinople branch to the management of the Venetian firm, had increased Sara's desire to keep the children out of the way, the boy and girl had found comfort in each other's company. Then, in the summer woodlands of green Cadore, in the plentiful vineyards of Verona during the autumnal cendemmia, in the Venetian schoolroom in winter, they had lived and played, and studied, side by side, equally neglected by parents and servants, had matured a love which they supposed to be but brotherly and sisterly affection.

Thus Daniele's scheme of sending Memmo to the Roman University, and to a tutor's house during the long vacations, thus Clara's stay in Florence, had proved ineffectual. Separation brought no break in their intimacy; their mutual tenderness pursued its course, ripening and blossoming and overcoming obstacles.

A sort of timidity had gradually entered into their intercourse, they were of late often silent when together. Sometimes Clara felt her cheeks suffuse when Memmo looked at her; she gave more attention to her dress. Memmo, even in the midst of his studies, would drop into long reveries.

Weary of her solitude, Clara resolved to find a time-table or ask about the arrival of trains from Rome.

She found that the stairs and the hall were crowded with servants, tradespeople and dress-

makers, and employees from all the quarters of Venice, and she shrank from the stare of the crowd. She longed for Memmo to assert his rights by sweeping away all this worldly exhibition.

She entered her grandfather's bedroom. There was a glare of candles and clouds of incense. The bed had been pushed against the wall, the mattress rolled up, the curtains pinned up. The carpet was now heaped against the wall under a large mirror which was shrouded in a white sheet.

Through the smoke Clara discerned figures moving; lean stooping old men in black coats and high hats, mumbling words of prayer, and chanting; they stooped low, then walked a few steps backward; they bent in clumsy obeisance, then stood upon their toes and fell back on their heels three times. On the marble floor in the middle of the room, was a circle of lighted candles. Within that circle was a shrouded mass of white, the outlines of a human figure!

And she fled. O! If only Memmo would come!

When the second day after death, friends and relatives came to attend the burial, they wondered at Memmo's absence. They knew that young men fresh from the University disliked the ancient Jewish funeral ceremonies. Indeed they often interfered to prevent them. Would the Rabbis allow Daniele to assume the rank of chief-mourner? What a judgment on Mose Sparnieri, the father of two sons, that his body should be washed by a cousin, and

that not one of his direct descendants should be present to say the kadisch over his open grave.

Round the circle of flaring candles, the nearest friends and relatives repeated after the Rabbis the ritual blessings on the departed. In their long, dark, flowing robes and their mitred hats the three Rabbis directed the office. Presently the chief Rabbi beckoned to Daniele, who advanced inside the circle. Carefully avoiding touching the floor with his knee, he uncovered one cold hand, and poured water over it. Without turning his back on the corpse, Daniele walked around it, escorted by the others in solemn procession, and when he reached the other side he once more bent over it, washed the other lifeless hand, and . . . shuddered.

Then the low chant swelled, Hebrew gutturals and nasal sounds, in strange melody; the body in its shroud was lifted into its golded coffin, the bottom pierced with many holes so that the inanimate flesh be in direct contact with the earth.

As a token of special deference for Mose Sparnieri, a little bag filled with the sacred dust of Jerusalem was put under the head as a pillow. Once more Daniele bent over the corpse, once more his hands had to feel the contact of that clammy flesh, and once more the cold shrinking terror spread through the nerves of the murderer.

Then the coffin was lifted on the shoulders of four bearers, and the solemn train, headed by Daniele and attended by servants bearing lighted candles, filed down the grand staircase.

A huge barge, plumed with white and black feathers, shrouded in black velvet, embroidered with many Hebraic inscriptions, rowed by black-clothed gondolieri, received its ghostly charge.

Daniele exchanged salutations and noted with satisfaction that the proudest merchants, the chiefest noblemen, the artists, the journalists, those who aspired to fortune, those who were threatened by ruin, all had come; each was anxious to be noticed, each wished to manifest his sympathy or to propitiate the financial potentate.

To Conte Miravelli D'Abbia Daniele said:

"Will your Excellency grant me the honor of sharing my gondola?"

"This day's work is telling on your nerves, Sparnieri," said D'Abbia, "You look wretchedly."

"So I am indeed," sighed Daniele, "Not merely worn out by the long and trying religious ceremonies, but also exhausted by the very heavy responsibility."

"I see! I see!" dropped the Prefetto. "You are acting as chief mourner, and you are to be the manager of the whole business. I thought that Umberto Sparnieri had left a son."

Daniele heaved a deep sigh and gave his companion a quick searching look.

"When you speak of Umberto's son, you touch a very sore point."

The Prefetto crossed his plump hands and waited for the usual story of misbehavior, imprudence, and debts—which he heard from afflicted parents every

day in the year during office hours, and which he knew too well through the extravagance and folly of his only son.

"What has the young man been doing? An imprudent marriage?"

"Worse. The boy is an intelligent fool, a man who has brains and lacks the ballast of common sense. He has all the qualities that go to the making of men, great for good or for evil, and he turns all these advantages to the worst of uses. He is a socialist! A leader of his party."

The Prefetto's lips tightened and he drew in his breath.

"Of course I could always wash my hands of him after I have handed over to him his half of the Sparnieri estate, his share of the inheritance, but you know that I am both trustee for the insane Marco Sparnieri and guardian of his daughter Clara. Now answer me, like an old and experienced friend, and, also like a Magistrate to whom I appeal in my dilemma, what must I do, knowing that the boy's birth is illegitimate because his parents' marriage was void?"

"Umberto Sparnieri was married to Maya Deleani, in the village of Mehdia near Tunis, by a Jewish Rabbi according to the Mosaic rite, and he died there a few weeks later without having regularized his union or even registered the deed at the Italian Consulate."

"At what time was this marriage celebrated?" inquired D'Abbia. "Previous to '74 it would be

perfectly legal. It was only in '74 that the *convenzione* was issued which makes the registry a *sine qua non* obligation for marriage in the East."

"I have not had the leisure to verify the date but it certainly was in '74 toward the end of the year—I was then in Constantinople. I heard the news of the marriage, by letter, on the same day I got the telegram announcing Umberto's death. Maya lived in the greatest seclusion and never claimed any rights. She seemed to have accepted her position, and died, very quietly, at the Lido, where she was buried."

"The case is complex. Several circumstances should be elucidated," the Magistrate said evasively. "The grandfather's will should be examined. Our courts of appeal have given the most contradictory decisions in matters of international law and the Mosaic laws have often been held in great consideration. If you mean to stand up in Court, take your measures prudently."

Daniele looked up with amazement. "You misunderstand me altogether," he said coldly. "I do not want to know how the thing may be decided by Magistrates. That is the boy's affair, not mine. As I am the only person who knows this secret, am I in honor bound to shut my lips and allow this leader of socialists to seize upon the enormous treasure of the Sparnieri and squander it in the destruction of Society? Should I be justified if I allowed him to marry my ward and thus to snatch the whole of this fortune? Is it not due to Society, due to Clara, that

I should defend them against the rapacity of an alien?"

He paused as if to recover his self-possession, and resumed, "Would it not be wiser to reserve these millions and this heiress for the scion of some noble and ancient family? You are a family man, Eccellenza, what are your views on the matter? Your personal views——"

"What?—Do you mean that——"

"I mean, I mean that when I decide to throw overboard Guglielmo Sparnieri, my ward, Clara, becomes the richest heiress in Italy and I want her to wear a coronet on that pretty head of hers."

Both Daniele and D'Abbia sat silent. The bait had been thrown; it was big enough to tempt even this big fish who pretended to disregard it. Why! The son whose broken health, whose evil habits had, ever been the impending sword hanging over his parents' heads, could be turned into an object of pride! Into the solid and reliable prop of their old age! Raised on a pedestal of gold and influence, Augusto would become as honorable as many other reformed rakes, and the world would forget his follies. The odds? Pooh! Daniele Sparnieri was a shrewd man, not likely to fall into the shallows of detection.

Conte Miravelli D'Abbia breathed heavily and his fingers twitched.

"How old is your son?" asked Daniele.

"My—my son is something like thirty-five. I do not remember exactly."

Daniele smiled. "That does sound old for a girl of eighteen, but—the name too is old." Then he added as if it were a new thought, "Of course you could only accept such a match if Clara were the sole heiress. If we are subjected to a suit or must pass through a judicial liquidation—Buona notte, I'll wash my hands of the whole affair and the Sparnieri money can go to the devil."

As he spoke the gondola stopped against the landing-stair of the cemetery. "Here we are! This second and most trying part of the burial must be got through." He sighed with unfeigned sadness and his face drawn with fatigue. "If you would spare yourself the trouble of assisting, I can let you have a gondola to take you back."

"Willingly would I keep you company. These ceremonies are nerve destroying."

Both came out of the felse and stood on the peak of the gondola while the gondolieri manoeuvred to round the landing place.

"By the way," said Daniele, turning toward the Magistrate with one foot already on the stone stair, "A very dangerous anarchist, who has a special grudge against me, has been uttering dreadful threats. He is suspected of preparing a bomb. The man lives—in Rio Terra della Mandola, his name is Vigo Vighi, and he pretends to be a printer. Remember the name—'Vigo.' Farewell. Ciao vecio."

Daniele stepped out of his gondola and, with firm gait and solemn mien took his place at the head of the procession that marched on to the stanza mor-

turaia, where the Rabbis were already chanting their Psalms, and awaiting the body for the last purifications.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER the stroke of midnight, when theatres and other social gatherings have released their attendants the Café Aragno on the Corco becomes the centre of attraction, the heart where beats the pulse of modern Rome.

Pressing round the small tables, on the sidewalk, leaning against door posts, sauntering from one group to another, are many men who have attained or strive to attain fame. Here parliamentary antagonists meet and exchange jokes or compliments about their oratorical duel of the morning; here the newly elected Member, fresh from the country, stares at the great man as he slips into his customary seat and orders his usual drink.

Here the comedy of life or its tragedy unrolls with pretended levity its real pathos. The dark eyes of a Neapolitan camorrista flash as he searches for the deputy of his district, lavish with proffered patronage before election, unwilling to keep his engagements now. Pilgrims from many countries, bearing alms to the Vatican, gaze amazed. They supposed the saintly prisoner was being starved and tormented amidst a nation of beggars and brigands; and they had denied themselves cheap pleasures, cherished comforts, in order to soften the straw bed

and provide the lenten fare of the Holy Father whom they saw this morning surrounded with kingly pomp among the splendors of the Vatican, honored by the government they had been told was persecuting him.

Students, elated by success or reckless after failure, in the final examination, throng in.

Memmo, sitting at a corner table, was surrounded by a dozen students.

"Compliments, Sparnieri! Your discussion of your thesis was a great success. The professors were so excited that we law students could hear them from our room. Even that Jesuit, Camogli, recognized the force of your arguments."

The filled glasses, tinkling with the fragments of ice, were raised in cheering toasts until the party dissolved and Lanza alone remained and, drawing his chair closer to Memmo's, lighted a cigarette.

"What are you going to do now?" he queried.

"First thing to-morrow—that is, to-day—when I have had a wink of sleep, rush back to Venice, as I am dreadfully anxious to see my grandfather."

"He is very old, and has been sometime suffering," suggested Lanza, pressing his elbow on the newspaper he had been reading.

Memmo sighed deeply and waved his hand as if he would not contemplate the possibility implied.

"What are your intentions, Lanza?"

"I mean to begin practice in Florence. You know, Memmo, I must support my mother and two sisters."

The two men smoked in silence.

"I can not make plans," said Memmo. "It all depends on the dear old Mose. Though I do want a year in Germany to study the organization of the socialist party, I would not go abroad just now if— if my grandfather wants me to stay."

"I think we had better turn in. It is late and you have to travel."

They rose and walked toward Memmo's rooms. Lanza wanted to see his friend home, expecting that some private telegram might be awaiting him, confirming the news of Mose's death which the evening papers had given. But in Memmo's room nothing was discovered beyond a pile of visiting cards, so Lanza departed.

Memmo lingered by his open window under the first glimmerings of dawn; he evoked memories of the past. Two little portraits on his table gave direction to his wandering thoughts. He smiled fondly on Clara's girlish figure in short frock and flowing tresses. How he loved those deep, passionate eyes.

Then a lingering sorrowful smile, to the faded daguerreotype of his mother. How pale and wan the young widow who after one short hour of happiness had lost everything! She used to sit listless and silent. Sometimes tears would roll down her sunken cheeks and sobs would shake her slender shoulders.

Memmo remembered the tiny house at the Lido, close to the sea. The long hours spent in his mother's room, sitting by her couch and feeling her soft hand as it played among his curls. At a later

"Even if you had been in Venice, Memmo, you could not have been called. No one anticipated the ending. I was in the house, yet . . . yet . . . I only saw him dead."

Memmo's only thought was for an immediate departure, an escape from Daniele's companionship, and a craving for Clara's sympathy and comfort.

And the rain beat on the windows and the branches cracked in the moaning dirge of the wind.

Memmo started to his feet and moved toward the bell rope.

"I must return at once to Venice and pay Nonno's remains the last tribute of respect."

"Before you ring, Memmo, I have something to tell you," said Daniele solemnly.

"Time enough to talk when we are on the train."

"There is no urgency for your departure: Mose Sparnieri was buried with all proper honor last evening. The whole town attended the burial."

"What!" shouted Memmo, "do you dare say that Nonno has been buried and I was not present!"

Daniele nodded in silence.

"Why then he must have died the very night that I left. And you hid it from me! Me! his only grandson!"

Memmo trembled with anger. Daniele sat motionless a somber light in his eyes, a cruel smile on his lips.

"I have already told you that we must talk together. The saddest of my sad tidings have not yet been spoken."

"What can you say to explain your damnable interference, your want of consideration for my feelings, my rights?"

"Did you know, Memmo, that your parents were never married?"

"It is a lie!"

"It is no lie, documents prove it." He pulled from his breast pocket a packet of legal papers and selected a rolled scroll of parchment. "This is the Ketouba recording that Umberto Sparnieri and Maya Deleani have been joined in the sight of God in the presence of a Rabbi and of a congregation, according to the Mosaic rite, but, as you see, there is no official stamp, no signature of any Italian authority, legalizing this document or proving it to have been registered at the Consulate, hence . . ."

"Hence what? If this ceremony was deemed sufficient by my parents it is more than sufficient for me."

"To be sure it is . . . in a certain way. Nor will I, a Jew, criticise the dead for conforming only to the Biblical precept; but the Italian law at the time they were married held in no consideration the Mosaic rite and so far as Tunis is concerned, accepted no registrar except the Italian Consulate. Therefore, this marriage deed is legally null and void."

Memmo was slowly turning over in his mind Daniele's words.

"I see, if this deed is null, if my parents did not perform all the prescribed formalities I am deprived

of my grandfather's inheritance. But I can bear it! There are compensations."

Then his brow darkened.

"Was Nonno aware of my position, and did he refuse to acknowledge me?"

"I cannot tell."

"Do you say that you, the confidential manager of our family affairs, never called Nonno's attention to my position?"

"That would have been against the interest of my wards. You can understand my scruples."

Memmo raised his hands to his face to conceal his grief from Daniele's cold stare. Then he walked towards the bell rope. Once more Daniele checked him.

"Why? There is still time to catch the train; I must be at home to-night."

"At home? . . . Home? You make my task more painful by your failure to understand. There is no such place in the world as a home for you. You could only enter the Sparnieri house as a guest, if your Aunt Sara should choose to invite you."

Memmo stared.

"Why should my relations with my family be altered? I do not intend to dispute my grandfather's will."

"You cannot tell what you may do on reflection. You may be persuaded to attempt to enforce your supposed rights . . . you may begin a law suit . . . That is your affair, not mine. My duty, as long as the will stands, as long as the authority of

the Consiglio di famiglia is recognised, is to enforce their decisions. Now your relation to the family has been thoroughly discussed by the Consiglio presided over by the Prefetto of Venice. Here is the report of its decision. As you see, it has been decided that you no longer belong to the family. It was even proposed to pay you to drop the Sparnieri name."

"So Aunt Sara disowns me? I can do without her. Yes! I can do without social rank and family connections, but there is one claim that I will not surrender. Not if all the Magistrates in Italy interfered."

"Stop, Memmo, mention no names. As I inherit your grandfather's authority, I must enforce this point, in conformity with his wishes which is also the Italian law and our national customs. No girl can dispose of her hand before coming of age."

"My cousin, like every other girl, has the right to dispose of her affections; and I have the right to accept no answer but hers."

Daniele shook his head and pursed his lips.

"Excuse me. When you fully realize your terrible situation you will refuse to draw the girl you love into social and financial disgrace. If you went to-day to Clara and proposed to her, she would immediately accept you. Her ignorance of the world, the boy and girl affection that has united you would decide her. But the proposal will not be made to her."

"Do you presume to prevent me?"

"Not I! Not I! though both Italian law and Italian custom grant me this right and dictate this duty. But you, Memmo, of your own free will, you will keep away for a time. You will realize that you, who are a bastard, will not try to bind an inexperienced girl with a promise (that would mean such enormous pecuniary advantage to you) until she is old enough to judge for herself, and able to appreciate you by comparison with other men. I do not assert my authority as her guardian, but I appeal to your sense of honor."

He held Memmo with his eyes, and did not allow him to answer.

"No, please! Make no promise! Let your own conscience decide whether it is right for you to ask, and for Clara to accept, such a premature engagement. You are not a cowardly fortune hunter, Memmo, I know you better. If you are sure of Clara's affection you can certainly wait and trust her to keep faithful to you. In such a case, in May, 1898, on her twentieth birthday, you may call upon her, and even if you have not an equivalent fortune or a social position to offer, you may speak to her. She will then be old enough to decide for herself."

Every word that fell from those pitiless lips cut Memmo like a knife.

"A year and a half," he breathed.

"Exactly so; eighteen months to wait and trust patiently and in silence. Is that too much for your constancy?"

"I would like to explain matters."

"That would be equivalent to a proposal. You know it as well as I do. Clara of course will be told what has happened and the reason of your staying away explained."

There was a long silence, then Memmo suddenly came up to Daniele.

"I will wait. I think it is due Clara's youth and inexperience and to my own self respect."

Daniele expressed neither surprise nor satisfaction, he simply put out his hand and shook Memmo's as if to ratify the promise, and after a short while, he rose to take his leave.

"Is there anything I can do for you, my boy? You know that there are people in the Ministry of Public Instruction that could not deny a place to anyone bearing the name of Sparnieri."

"Thank you; but I am not a Sparnieri, and I would rather obtain a situation by other means than favoritism. I shall adopt my mother's surname and spend the last francs I have of the Sparnieri money to pay for the royal decree that will ratify the change. Now go, Daniele! You will not see me till the Fifth of May, 1898."

CHAPTER VII

LIKE some hideous nightmare in Clara's memory was that first week after Nonno's death. She shivered at the remembrance of the distressing ceremonies of *Avel*; that strange assembling in Nonno's room in the glare of the burial candles, when the Chief Rabbi had cut a strip of cloth from her blouse told her to widen the rent and repeat after him some strange words, while all around her a choir of dark figures in shaggy beards and rusty hats bobbed and nodded and voiced a discordant chant.

Thrice each day she had been forced to sit on the heap of rolled up bedding in that ghostly death chamber, while ten hired mourners entuned orisons for the deceased. Each time was repeated the long roll call of ancestors, summoned out of the blessed abode of "ghalghened" to meet and welcome the last scion of their race.

Visitors came and all through the day they swarmed at prayer time and shared the mourning meals. All the poor relatives and humble friends of their early poverty now made the most of their opportunity to obtain the favor of the wealthy banker, and to seek the support of Sara, who had become a leader in society.

Sara worried Clara by perpetual insistence on the

minute details of these ceremonies, and Daniele insisted that she must hold her rank and make amends, for the other relative who had disregarded its duties. A strange shyness prevented Clara from openly defending Memmo except to Bendolfi.

"Oh, Rabbi! These days of *Avel* have been so trying to me that I do see some excuse for his staying away."

"That is your fundamental error. The false direction given to that spiritual delicacy which you have been granted is the pendant of Memmo's politics. He is waylaid into making a god of humanity; you have made a religion of beauty."

He patted Clara's head, then he continued with a sigh,

"Did you know that I am going away? I owe to Daniele's kind interest my nomination to the place of head master in the Rabbinic College of Modena, and I go there on Monday next. I am sorry to go without seeing Memmo. Tell him that I am displeased with him, that he must write and explain to his old tutor his reasons for acting as he has done."

Clara was sorry to lose her old friend, but was consoled by the thought of a speedy return to her Florence school and was busily preparing her books and music and looking over her school dresses when her mother walked into her room.

"You may let these things alone. We have decided that you are to stay at home, and have the best finishing masters; then, when the first months

of mourning are over, you will be presented to Society as the wealthiest heiress in Venice. We have decided that the three rooms, on the Canale Del Ovo, will be refurnished for your own private apartment. What do you say to that?"

Clara was surprised and not pleased. Yet the prospect held some allurements.

Yet as the days and the weeks and the months passed without bringing Memmo she waited and waited with an ever growing loneliness. Yet she was too proud and too shy on this one subject to ask the reason for his absence. Clara tried to persuade herself that she ought to feel happy, and that she ought to appear happy, that she was happy. She even felt irritated at being forced to accept Daniele's attentions. What was he to her, or she to him? A distant cousin who had faithfully served in the bank. Surely Daniele had been amply rewarded for his services by the position he now occupied. Why should his affection be forced upon her? Daily this devotion increased and daily she chafed more painfully.

Then Daniele's intense feeling had deprived him of his usual quick perceptions. In his eagerness to anticipate Clara's wishes, he showed the clumsiness of a distracted lover, and often gave offense when most he wanted to please.

He had indeed secured for his daughter the entire wealth of the Sparnieri; he had removed Memmo but he had not as yet won Clara's affection.

In this craving for Clara's love, Daniele's nature

seemed transformed. For her sake he was still the pitiless usurer and oppressor. Yet he yearned to renew his spirit, to leave it clean from fraud, and cruelty, and lust, so as to be more worthy of her. He would have done wicked things in a spirit of redeeming love.

When he expected to meet Clara, he tried to harbor only pure thoughts. The oriental instinct for ceremonial washing was strangely mixed with a vague craving for a more complete purification than that of the flesh alone.

He used every art, practised every subterfuge, to give Clara a good opinion of him, and he turned her esthetic education into a continual pretext for attending her in visits to art galleries; or in rambles about such out-of-the-way corners as might still conceal some relics of ancient art, some undiscovered object of beauty.

When the hour came for Daniele to take his seat by Clara's side in her gondola, the greatest bankers waited in vain, Daniele cared for nothing beyond the splendid creature who barely acknowledged his attention with a polite smile.

These were golden hours for Daniele. If only Clara's smile brightened, if only her face lighted with interest in his explanation, Daniele was happier than if, by a clever stroke, he had ruined a foe and pocketed the spoils.

In fondness for her, some of his lowest instincts mingled. He encouraged her to develop that which he called the full expansion of her aptitudes, the

education of her ego. He persuaded her that by pampering to her caprices, she could raise her standard of life.

Startled at first, afterwards attracted by these theories, Clara attempted to follow him. She spent much time in planning and directing the arrangement of her apartment, reconstructed after the Venetian style of the fourteenth century.

Musicians sang and played for her, and famous actresses recited in her drawing room. Until one day when she was thinking of some new diversion it came upon her that these luxuries brought no real enjoyment, neither peace nor satisfaction. Her pleasure in self-indulgence was only an effect of suggestion. With this realization her dislike for Daniele was increased, because she felt that it was he who had tempted her to this false and frivolous self-indulgence.

Thus it happened that while Daniele cherished the notion that his influence over Clara would ultimately drift into love, he was, in fact, losing ground constantly. But Daniele made worse mistakes when he concluded that Clara desired a gayer life.

He now dreamed of his daughter's admission within the most select circles of the Venetian aristocracy. Baron Della Chioia, the Conte della Mora, the Brandolin and Gonzaga, Zirmani and Pandolfini, were seen to enter his office. One morning, the intelligence spread in the Piazzetta, that Sparnieri was going to buy all the ancient Palazzi on the Canalazzo.

Daniele did not deny the rumor, and in the middle of Carnival week he told Sara they were all going to the "Cavalchina" at La Fenice.

Sara stared in amazement. Not in her wildest dreams had she ever thought of participating in that most select gathering of the Venetian nobility! Clara who had never been present at a Veglione was curious, but not at all elated by the prospect.

When the evening came, and Daniele was admitted to her dressing room, he thrilled with joy, and paternal pride. When at length he dared speak, it was only to express some trite compliments.

"You have not thought of a fan," said Daniele, "Let me see whether I have found something suitable?"

Inside the velvet case was a chain of amethysts set in wrought loops of enamelled silver, to which was attached a small fan of Venetian lace. Clara's initials, in amethysts, were inserted on the tortoise mounting.

"I thought these stones would do well on this crepe," Daniele's hands trembled and his heart beat fast as he fastened round Clara's waist the chain; and it took all his strong will to resist the impulse of clasping and kissing her.

When Sara saw her daughter she insisted that Clara wrap herself in something warmer than the gauzy burnous which could not keep out the cold. With maternal solicitude, she called Clara to follow her toward the bronze gate.

"Please, Clara, put your hand to the Mehruzha,

and then kiss the tips of your fingers. I'll say the words of the verse for you. You are looking so well to-night that I am afraid of the evil eye. So many of these wicked gohim will be looking at you, and God knows, that they are but too ready to wish you harm. To rharefod all of them!"

"Nonsense, Mother! You do not really believe in the evil eye."

"Wait till you have seen the effects of ghain ahrang, child, before you make light of it. May all good angels listen to my words." She piously touched the scroll fixed on the wall and then kissed her fingers, while she murmured some Hebrew words, "Don't you know dear, that even those who love us best can bring us the jettatura, when they look upon us and do not call a blessing on our heads? I don't believe in coral horns, but the golden Shadai and the little hand which you wore when you were a child, reassured me. The starting from home without touching the Mehzuzha is not only courting danger, it is also disobeying the precept in the Schemang."

Daniele laughed at Sara's earnestness, but he raised Clara's hand toward the scroll.

"For your mother's sake, cara." Piously he repeated the whole of the verse, and added other blessings.

The Sparnieri party made their way up the narrow stairs that lead up to the boxes of the second tier, between a double hedge of masks and dominos, a swarm of rustling silks, waving plumes, and stream-

ing ribbons, out of which came many greetings and apostrophes, compliments and jokes, to all those who, like them, passed on with uncovered faces.

"*Cio bela*," said Arlecchino offering to Clara a bunch of exquisite orchids.

"*To bruto maccaco*," cried a pert Rosaura, as she threw in Daniele's face a handful of confetti.

"Here we are," said Daniele opening the box on the right of the royal one in the centre. Each box on the triple row looked like a jewel *ecrin* in which, against a background of flowers, the ladies in full dress stood in relief. The pit and dress circle were transformed into a ballroom. The orchestra was playing one of those emotional Vienna waltzes.

Sara beamed, scattering smiles and nods, swelling with pride at every new visitor that entered her box. Daniele however was not fully satisfied. True that he had obtained, besides this invitation, a visit from Senator Gandolin and another from Conte Zirmani, the two most rigid champions of exclusivism; true that Conte Miravelli D'Abbia from the royal box had shaken his hand, and had bowed ceremoniously to Sara, yet he felt the hostility hovering in the atmosphere. The cordiality of the men did not prevent the women ignoring them.

Presently a band of masks invaded the box. They offered pretty gifts, addressed shrill compliments, puzzled Sara by telling her that they knew her well, and invited Clara to come and dance with them.

As Clara looked up with a girl's longing for

amusement, one of them, a splendid Cavalier di Malta, lifted his mask:

"Perhaps you will grant me that honor, Signorina. At least for a little walk around the galleries."

Clara recognised Lieutenant Feltri, and consented to go down to the Foyer.

"Will you turn here on the terrace, and get a view of the Canale," said Feltri eagerly, "you do not like this medley."

"Yet it is very gay. Every one seems to enjoy it. I suppose I must learn to like it too."

"Let us try and find something less commonplace. Look! This is worthier of your attention."

He opened a door, and led Clara onto the balcony.

In front of them the Palazzo Dario rose in exquisite perfection bending (as D'Annunzio says) like a courtesan under the weight of its magnificence. The Canale was silent and deserted. In the distance, towards San Marco, a barge decorated with flowers and Venetian lamps was gliding away into the laguna. In this shimmering light, under the violet veil of mist, the gaudy boat assumed a charm of attenuated gaiety; the sound of voices and mandolins joining in snatches of popular songs, mingled with the murmuring of waters and the beat of unseen oars, came sweetly to the ear.

"O this is infinitely better," said Clara. Then leaning with both her hands on the iron balustrade, she forgot Feltri's presence and the Veglione, in her admiration of the scene.

The barge drifted out of sight, the moon van-

ished behind a cloud, a voice in the distance sang a prolonged melancholy melody. From Clara's heart a sigh answered the appeal, she felt the emptiness and loneliness of her life.

Feltri stood near, drinking the bitter draught of his hopeless infatuation. He knew the value of the prize, his pulses throbbed with yearning, his soul was filled with tender respect but something unaccountable chilled the words that rose to his lips.

There they stood, under the first rays of the dawning sun in the fresh breeze that fanned their fresh cheeks, youth and beauty in a solitude that breathed of love, in the most stimulating atmosphere of desire and joy, parted by accumulated age long racial hatred, by social prejudice.

CHAPTER VIII

FEW places are more cosmopolitan than the Café Florian in Venice. Its doors have remained open for two hundred and fifty years, and around its tables illustrious personages, noble princes and great artists, have sat; yet there are few places where tradition is more strictly observed. There are certain tables in certain corners which are tacitly reserved to certain occupants at certain hours.

Marchesa Della Penna would rather have omitted her morning mass at Santa Maria Zobenigo, in the family pew, than gone without her afternoon chocolate at the Cafe Florian in the corner seat reserved for her.

When the short winter days began to lengthen and afternoon visits were over, though it was too early for the indispensable sunset stroll on the Piazzetta, as the sonorous bell of Santa Maria della Salute chimed the hour of five o'clock, her ladyship would proceed along the Procuratie, and when the Moretto on the Torre dell 'Oriuolo had lowered his hammer for the fifth time her party would settle round the privileged table by the window, and the waiter would slip under the Marchesa's feet the stool reserved for that service.

Conte Altieri d'Alna was sure to be there, as

cavalier servente. Conte Altieri d'Alna was still an attractive "cavalieri." His aristocratic figure and engaging manners had formerly won the heart of many a maid and woman, but since he had enlisted under the colors of the piquante widow he had renounced all other ambition. He had deserted a creditable diplomatic career and declined an honorable office that would have taken him from Venice; his attitude towards the Marchesa combined the advantages of an accepted situation with the independence of bachelor life. He was the arbiter elegantiorum of the aristocratic set and his liaison was quoted as a model.

One afternoon, Feltri, wearing the gay uniform of the Savoia Reale, joined the pair as they sat down.

"What have you been doing with yourself, young man?" asked the Marchesa, languidly, as she handed her sunshade to D'Altieri.

D'Altieri leaned toward the young officer. "I hope you are not concerned in that row at Lavena's" he whispered. "What about that pack of cards containing too many kings?"

Feltri raised his hand warningly. "The affair must not be mentioned. The scandal would have spread too far and too high."

"It would have gone hard with you youngsters," interrupted the Marchesa, "if a Magistrate's son had not been with you."

"For heaven's sake," whispered Feltri, "not twenty people in Venice know the truth, and these

will hold their tongues. Things have been arranged. We made him promise to reform."

"I see; you paid his debts. In my time," said D'Altieri, "such a rascal would have been expelled had he been the son of a white goose."

"Mosca," said the Marchesa, as Contessa Miravelli D'Abbia entered the salon and pretended to look about for an empty seat.

D'Altieri rose and made way for the Contessa.

"It's a pity you were not at the Zanetti's Concert, you missed a splendid performance. That little Sparnieri is a capital singer. Such gifts and such beauty ought to have been granted to a portionless girl."

"Do you grudge a Jewess even her talent?" asked D'Altieri.

"Indeed she needs all her talents, poor thing, to make us tolerate those two horrid chaperones."

"Why, Dan Sparnieri is not more vulgar than other bankers," pleaded Feltri.

"You are no judge, lieutenant, you are a late comer in Venice; I remember Sara—before she made that opportune marriage with an idiot—mending lace in the antiquity shop kept by her father."

"I knew Daniele in Constantinople," rejoined D'Altieri. "Perbacco! the whole European diplomacy opposed his banking enterprise, yet he managed to cajole, bribe, threaten, use them one against the other. Here in Venice the old firm positively controls the market. By the way, it is whispered that under pretence of keeping the Moro Lins afloat

he has utterly robbed them. Even of their pretty little villa in Misurina." D'Altieri checked himself and resumed pleasantly, "But still the girl is charming, if somewhat cold."

"Cold!" exclaimed Marchesa Della Penna. "Freezing. She smiles, she dances, she laughs, but it is all as automatic as a mechanical doll; she is not interested. That comes of having a Christian education which makes her ashamed of her own people."

"No, not ashamed," protested D'Altieri. "You can't associate the idea of shame with that splendid creature. She is like a Caterina Cornaro, or an Elisabetta d'Este, with that simple grandeur of pose. Did you notice, Feltri, how she resembled Tiziano's Dogaresa last night at the Fenice, with that diadem of rubies in her black hair?"

"Grant me," observed the Marchesa, annoyed, "that young girls, not yet presented at Court, are better without such jewels!"

She sipped a spoonful of chocolate and whispered to Contessa D'Abbia. "I could almost swear that the diadem comes directly from the safe of the Moro Lins. I know those rubies even when they are reset; dear Emilia used to wear them in a heavy necklace. But look! There they are mother and daughter, coming across the Piazza."

"Perbacco!" exclaimed Feltri. "How well that girl can walk. 'Incessu patuit dea!'"

"Truly the step of a goddess," commented D'Altieri, "but of a goddess that has lost her seren-

ity. A heavy heart, poor thing, bravely disguised under that pretty mask."

Clara indeed was not happy; she resented the daily slights inflicted on her and her family yet she recognised that, in a certain way, these were justified by Sparnieri intrusion. Why was she forced to mix with persons for whom she did not care, and who did not care for her?

She realised that the barrier was not due merely to hereditary prejudice or ill-will in these representatives of another race, and of another caste, but that it was chiefly caused by her own antipathy for them.

Why could she not oppose Daniele's will and resist his orders?

Daniele himself realised that his attempt to conquer the Venetian aristocracy had been a victory of Pyrrhus because premature and handicapped by Sara's vulgarity. He now sought to retreat in good order and gain time.

He noted also Clara's weariness and the dark rings under her eyes. Easter week provided an excuse for speaking of *villeggiatura* and when the first warm breezes announced the coming of spring, the Sparnieri Palazzo was closed and it was announced that the family had left town.

Far up in the mountains of Cadore, close to the Austrian frontier, where the majestic Dolomites encircle the Lake of Misurina with dark woodland and snowy peaks, in the highest inhabited altitude of

the region, was the palazzina which Daniele had seized from the spendthrift Moro Lin.

There in the bracing air, Daniele believed Clara would recover her gaiety and beauty: there without his consent, neither Memmo nor a message could reach her from the nearest town of Belluno—four long hours' ride across mountain paths.

In this congenial atmosphere Clara's nerves and imagination found repose. Then the hopefulness of youth suggested that this was the very place for Memmo to come and make the explanation which he certainly wished, though for some reason, he had avoided meeting Daniele since Nonno's death.

Everything around recalled Memmo. In such places they had played together in childhood. Sara was absent now as then, nursing her liver at the baths of Montecatini. Daniele was away most of the week, weaving the web of financial intrigue.

Each morning brought the same fond hope, each evening closed with its deception, and yet every day the hope grew stronger and the expectation more vivid for the moment approached when Clara would come of age.

One day she stood on the brow of the ridge, looking down into the valley, searching the path by which their eyrie was accessible and wondering what she should say if Memmo suddenly appeared, when far below she saw a small carriage. Her heart leaped, it was not the dogcart which Daniele usually drove across the Cadore. One solitary figure sat behind the driver. Then her heart sank; it was Daniele.

The horses galloped up the last slope and Daniele jumped out and linked his arm within hers.

"I came all the way from Venice to have a little talk with you, carissima."

"Is it such a rare treat, zietto?"

He smiled at the name of uncle, the only one he had dared to suggest, and which Clara rarely used.

"Your company, carissima, is always happiness to me."

He sighed and Clara was startled by his earnestness.

"Are you aware that you will be of age soon. That you are one of the richest partis about the—the market?"

Clara thrilled with joy at the bitterness of his tone. She remembered Daniele's antipathy for Memmo.

"You will be of age in six months and the mistress of one of the biggest fortunes in Italy. No man on earth is worthy to be entrusted with such wealth, but still less is any man worthy of—your dear self. As your guardian I must protect you against—against the simplicity of your heart and the snares that may be set for you."

How unlike Memmo was this formal message.

"I will then perform my office," pursued Daniele, "When you have decided you will only need me for the settlements."

"Nonsense! Who can think of settlements! As if Memmo—"

"What has Memmo to do with this affair? He

can not interfere in your marriage. We are well rid of him and by this time he has probably married the girl in whose house he has been boarding all this year. The proposals I have to report from two honorable men. One of your suitors is Feltri, the other is Augusto D'Abbia."

He praised Feltri's manners, his social standing, his expectations, but he hinted of gambling habits and of some indelicacy that had been whispered against him.

"D'Abbia is not a brilliant man, and he is not young, but he bears a grand old name; by marrying him you would secure a social position equal to your financial standing, and worthy of your personal merits. Then he is very deeply attached to you."

"I don't wish to marry anybody," gasped Clara.

"Just as it pleases you, cara, I am not pressing D'Abbia upon you. I only insist that you give audience to D'Abbia, who has my leave to come and try his luck.

"O please spare me this interview!"

"No, my dear child. I have arranged with him that on Sunday he will come here for a short visit. He has the right to speak for himself."

By this time they had reached the house and Clara hastened to her own room, and presently sent word that she would not come down to dinner.

Clara was in great distress. Daniele's cruel words had struck deeply. She did not blame Memmo for loving another. With Italian and Jewish fatalism she accepted her lot. She was alone in the

world! The prospect of long years of hopeless solitude appalled her. She forgot her unwelcome suitor, often like a tired child she would weep softly.

The first day of comfort came with her distrust of Daniele's statements about Memmo. She would appeal directly to him. She wrote Memmo a long letter in which she expressed her sorrow and wonder at his silence. She frankly told him that she was now greatly embarrassed by Daniele's insistence upon her marriage with a man she could not love. She asked Memmo to give her advice and she suggested that he meet her alone, if he did not care to see her guardian.

When Clara had deposited her letter at the office of Misurina she felt greatly relieved.

Anxious days passed, and no answer came.

Twice every day a woman tramped up to Misurina bearing the letter bag which the "diligence" left at the roadside inn; and each time Clara, met the messenger at the same turning of the path, and each time she received the same answer "Niente, Signorina."

Still she waited and hoped, still she repeated to herself that Memmo would surely answer her appeal. Saturday night brought Daniele but no letter.

She dreaded offending a man she hardly knew by sight, but who might consider himself as an encouraged suitor. Why should she not ask her mother to protect her? Yes, that was the best way. Stepping out on her balcony, Clara watched the windows of the façade and noted how one by one, the lamps

were put out, and only the bedroom windows continued to cut out a square of brightness on the dark walls.

The quietness of the evening brought some peace to strained nerves. She would keep faithful to Memmo's ideal, and she must certainly obtain some place in his affections. The pure cold hills smiled on her; the lake glistened beyond the thicket and the rippling sound of its waters cradled her sorrow. Suddenly she noted that at the furthest end of the building, in the little conservatory specially reserved to her mother's use, a light was burning. Thinking that this unusual watchfulness of her mother's might be caused by anxiety about the coming visit, Clara felt a still stronger impulse to appeal to her, ask for assistance and protection from this unwelcome suitor.

Noiselessly she felt her way along the dark passage and down the stairs; the narrow passage which led to the conservatory was entirely dark. Clara groped along it, by putting out her hands to the walls.

In the silence, as Clara stopped, feeling for the door, from the other side of it she heard sobs and moaning. Then came Daniele's angry voice.

"You have always been a fool! No other man on earth could have had more patience with you. Do you think I will allow your cursed stupidity to stand in my way—I'll rather—see you—first. Shut up, damn you."

There was a sound as if someone were being roughly shaken. Then again Daniele's voice, "Do

you want all the servants to know—that I am tired—of you? What are you anyway!”

Clara ran wildly away; somehow she reached and entered her own door, then fainted.

* * * * *

D'Abbia arrived that morning, and the ordeal of lunch was gotten over. Daniele's unflagging spirits disguised the oppressive atmosphere.

“Clara, will you kindly escort Conte D'Abbia to visit our beautiful lake while I write a few letters? I will join you soon.”

Daniele did not wait for an answer but left the room. As she crossed the hall Clara took a sunshade from the rack and walked down the path that led to the lake, indifferent to D'Abbia.

In silence he followed her, wondering. He fumbled in his pocket for the three-cornered chestnut that was to bring him luck at this turning point in his career and noted several omens.

They entered the boat and a few pulls sent it from the shore. Clara broke the silence.

“My guardian has told me, Conte, the object of your visit. You may spare yourself any further explanation of your intentions. You have asked to marry me, and you pay me the honor of saying that you have some sort of an inclination for me——”

“The deepest devotion——”

“Please allow me to finish. I take for granted all you feel bound to add.” She stopped and shut her eyes. “When my guardian first announced your proposed visit and its purpose I determined to re-

fuse you, but since then circumstances have arisen which have altered my purpose. I am ready to marry you, though I confess that I do not care for you at all."

"May I know what those circumstances are?"

"No! They have nothing to do with you, and I will only accept you on condition that you never mention them to me."

"I am so deeply attached to you that I am thankful to take you at your own terms. I trust the power of my love to win your regard."

Clara stiffened and spoke sharply. "No! I will never love you. I promise that in the eyes of the world I will be a worthy Contessa D'Abbia; but—never—never except in name will I be—your wife."

D'Abbia's face burned with humiliation at the shameful terms. He could not consent to sell his name to a woman, he could not humble himself to be used as a puppet. But the remembrance of promissory notes, some of them forged, the certainty of exposure, ruin, imprisonment, his mother's despair, made him pause.

"You refuse to give me a reason for your behavior?"

"I refuse. It is not my secret."

"Not your secret!" burst out D'Abbia. "Can you at least give me the assurance that you are not hastening into this marriage to—to escape from the consequences—to get out of—in one word, have I a fortunate rival in your affections?"

"I do not follow your meaning. But this I can

swear, that no man on earth cares for me—or has ever cared.”

Clara had not been offended by the insult, she had not understood. D’Abbia breathed more freely.

“Loyalty to the man I accept obliges me to confess that—formerly—that I have entertained a feeling—for one who has lately shown me that he never reciprocated—this feeling. That is a reason, but not the chief reason, why I have changed my decision.”

So pale was her face, so dejected her attitude, she seemed in such pain as she spoke, that D’Abbia bent toward her, impulsively. She put out her hand imperatively.

“None of this! Please! If you accept my terms please arrange matters with my guardian, so as to have the marriage celebrated as soon as possible, as I must leave this house quickly.”

CHAPTER IX

LET Professore Deleani know that Conte D'Abbia wishes to see him and will wait for his leisure."

The door-keeper of the Istituto Tecnico of Leghorn took the card.

D'Abbia fumed as he walked to and fro under the cloistered portico, wondering at his great condescension. He hated the job; he cursed Daniele Sparnieri, who had persuaded him to try this industrial enterprise; he cursed the factory-hands who threatened to strike and whose demands it was difficult to deny; he cursed the bankers who had lately hinted that, even though backed by the Sparnieri alliance, there was a limit to his credit; he cursed the cards; he cursed the ballet girl whose demands were so ruinous; but above all he cursed Deleani! What sort of a man could he be? A camorista, of course, since he was beloved by the rabble.

Public opinion had suggested him to D'Abbia as the most likely to conciliate his workmen. D'Abbia thought that he would surely be tempted by money or would be accessible to offers of patronage.

Memmo, coming out of the classroom, had received the message and was meditating. He did not shrink from the responsibility of his position as

"Carte blanche, Professore! Prepare your bill as soon as you choose."

' He vanished without seeing Memmo's look of amazement. He had been offered a bribe, and D'Abbia had left, persuaded of his acceptance.

Well! let the scoundrel fall into his own trap. "I'll serve my friends of the club better, for having been misjudged by this rascal!"

Under Memmo's directions a club had been opened among the socialist workmen. In these humble, rudely furnished rooms, with untiring good will and simplicity he taught the principles of his political creed, appealing to the reason rather than to the emotions of his audience.

One of the most interesting of his recent recruits was the man named Vigo, reputed a dangerous anarchist, but whom Memmo considered as only an unhappy man, embittered by some great wrong and by constant hunger.

Vigo was pale, tall, of uncertain age. His reckless look and a bright hectic flush that often came to his cheek, might have been the effect of strong drink, or the symptoms of disease. His conversation indicated a better education than his present way of living seemed to justify. He generally shrank from observation, but at times he would address the club in violent speeches of mingled hatred and solid arguments.

Vigo had been shy and reluctant at first, almost diffident, but after an incident he had become devoted to Memmo.

On going one night to the club, Memmo heard shouts in the "Sala delle Conferenze." Hastening in, he saw Vigo standing on the platform with gleaming eyes and clenched fists, while the cries of "rene-gato," "spy," "traitor," drowned his voice.

"What is all this noise about?" asked Memmo, walking up to the infuriated men.

It seemed for a moment that the flood of indignation would turn on him, so angry and so confused were the cries that greeted his interference.

"The man is a spy! A traitor! He has been seen talking to a disguised policeman! He comes here to provoke and then to report!"

Memmo shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

"You! You! You side with him! You are no real workman! You are both "politicanti." You use poor people like stepping stones!"

"You are fools, all of you! You are fools if you are not blind instruments, used by those who have an interest in sowing discord amongst you. For shame!"

The growl that answered this was ominous, but Memmo continued,

"Why do you dream of traitors and spies? What is said here that free men have not the right to say? All the magistrates in the town could not forbid these meetings. You dream of playing rebels! You are like children frightened at scarecrows of their own making."

There was a pause; someone growled, others laughed and Memmo continued,

"What evidence have you of this man's treason? Because he speaks violently and does not share all your opinions? This is a platform where every champion of ideas is welcome to discuss them freely. Go to the osterias and get drunk, if you cannot behave like respectable men." He spoke to Vigo; "Come out of this noise and tell me what has happened."

"Let us have coffee," said Memmo. "It will steady our nerves."

Vigo instead of answering, threw his arms across the table, dropped his face between them and sobbed. His slender shoulders, clothed in a thread-bare jacket, shook painfully. Memmo gazed at him, perplexed. What would account for this sudden breakdown? He laid his hand on Vigo's shoulder.

"Compose yourself, man, and tell me: what can I do for you?"

Suddenly Vigo slipped down to the floor in a faint.

"He is starving," suggested the waiter.

"Bring milk and rolls quickly."

Vigo opened his eyes, with a famished look he gazed on the rolls and milk.

"I should have guessed," he gasped, "that a fit would be coming on. I have eaten nothing all day."

"I know not how to thank you."

"Then don't," said Memmo, pleasantly, as he pretended to be engrossed with his own food.

"I am a fool," added Vigo. "These ignorants could never understand the principles of anarchy."

"I know almost nothing of those principles," an-

swered Memmo, "beyond the unsafe basis of man's essential goodness and society's essential badness."

"Do you call that position unsafe which answers to the highest philosophic conception of humanity and follows the doctrine of human love. O Memmo, you want to be a leader of men and you ignore the habits of the police! If I tell you the story of my life, it may be a lesson to you."

Memmo lighted a cigarette, offered another to Vigo and smiled encouragingly.

"I was living in—never the mind the city—and was a printer. I got good wages but I provoked the enmity of a very powerful man. He wanted me to be sent away. Do you guess how easily that can be done. He whispered his charge against me to the Procuratore del Re, and caused a visita domiciliare to my rooms. The fact of my possessing several sheets of the work of Kropotkine,—we were printing them at the office—and the aggravation of my having scribbled some notes in the margins, were considered sufficient proof of the charge."

"Your enemy must have been a person of great influence."

"He is the devil!" Vigo's eyes glared with insane fury. "That man has destroyed me, and if I cling to life, it is because I intend to kill him."

Vigo's violence choked his speech, then he resumed, "But a few months ago I was a happy and busy man. I earned my living and kept my wife and child in comfort. How sweet and pretty and good the wife, whom the traitor persuaded me to marry.

I had not dared to propose marriage, she was so refined. But he helped us to start housekeeping. She was so pretty, so industrious. Then we had a child! Do you know what it means for a man who toils all day in a dark unwholesome office to think of the baby, fresh and rosy, that will creep to his knee when he gets home, and cling to him with those little arms?"

Vigo's hand across the table clutched and crushed Memmo's.

"Then one day, suddenly, to be told that all your love has been wasted, all your toil has been lavished on another man's child!" Vigo hissed between his clenched teeth. "Do not tell me that jealousy distracted me; she allowed me no benefit of doubt. She crushed me with positive evidence."

"She may have spoken in spite," suggested Memmo. "She may have aggravated her wrongs impelled by a quarrel."

"No! No! There is not the slightest doubt. I have examined the facts carefully. You have met her, Memmo. Tell me, does it not strike you that she is quite unlike me?"

"I have met her on the stairs—as we live in the same house—a quiet, pale-faced child with a very sad expression. Indeed such sadness in a child's face has haunted me."

"Alas! Alas!" groaned Vigo, "She is miserable enough, poor thing. Her sadness haunts you! It maddens me! O Memmo, pity me! I love that

child with the passionate devotion of a father! And I crave her mother's caresses!"

Vigo's face dropped once more on his arms, his shoulders shook with sobs. Memmo waited in silence, then said soothingly,

"You have a noble heart, Vigo. Your tenderness for that innocent child would redeem any past failing. Follow this instinct of devotion and love, it will lead you out of your present grief to the noblest satisfaction."

Vigo lifted his face, distorted by passion and stained with tears, "I cannot!" he said despondently. "I have no power left. My health and my will are broken. I cannot stick to my purpose. There is no steadiness in my work. I feel ready to kill myself when the child weeps, yet I bully her. I would give my life for her, yet at times she irritates me by her presence. O Cristo! I have struck her! Yes, I have lifted my hand in anger—I have bruised that flesh—spilt that blood—which are the flesh and blood of my enemy. Yet if her mother only beckoned to me—would only tolerate me!—O, this is hell!"

CHAPTER X

IT had not been difficult for Memmo to adopt the quiet ways of a small city and to keep his expenses within his salary. His inclination and education had prepared him for this placid acceptance of an humble situation. The reverent affection for old Rabbi Bendolfi had convinced him that the possession of money in no wise indicated either intellectual or moral superiority.

Lanza had secured for him the position at Leghorn. There he gave as much time as he could spare from his professional duties to helping the working classes and he lived with those he desired to help, in order to know their wants and comprehend their manner of thought.

As an instance of his unfailing luck, Memmo, recalled how he had secured his pleasant quarters in the Beltrani household. Provided with a letter of introduction from Lanza, he had strolled out one day, soon after his arrival, to find the Piazza delle Isole, a vast and quiet square opening half way up the Passeggiata which skirts the seashore, terminates on the opposite side in the popular borough of San Jacopo, not far from the sea. A combination of breezy space and of humble neighborhood which answered Memmo's wants.

Reaching the address given by Lanza, Memmo found that the small house appeared to have once been an elegant palazzetta, intended for villeggiatura, though now reduced to more practical use by renting it in two flats.

"Signora Beltrani? Certainly she is at home? And so is her daughter. Somewhat stiff with their neighbors, but there, you know, it is erring on the right side. Yes, they keep boarders, and if they take you in you may be sure it's the best quarters a man can wish for."

Signora Beltrani invited her visitor into the parlor.

"My friend, avvocato Lanza,"——

"Lanza! The dear fellow! I hope he is doing well. I was very fond of him when he stayed with us last summer."

"He gratefully remembers your hospitality, since he directs me to you."

"You are his friend, and you teach at the Istituto Tecnico? Then he has written to recommend you."

She searched for her spectacles, which she fixed on her nose:

"What a nuisance it is to grow old and to wear these horrid things. O, bless my soul, this is only the baker's bill. I am afraid if you are at the Istituto Tecnico you may find our prices rather high. Now don't ask me to take less. I only take in two lodgers, and they must fill the gap between my income and my wants." She smiled and winked confidentially. "I should say my daughter's wants. She is born a

lady. I am only of farmer's stock, rough and easy. Her father, you know, was a gentleman and had genius. Renza too has genius. She is the dearest, brightest——"

A clear young voice called out from the inner room, "Mother, whom are you oppressing with my praises?"

"That's my Renza. Come here, Renza, you are wanted." Turning confidentially to Memmo, she whispered, "If I were to take you in and my Renza afterward disapproved of you, out you would have to go. She is only mistress here; I always call her *lamia buona padrona*."

Lorenza appeared on the threshold, a beautiful girl, with a halo of light fluffy hair and brilliant complexion.

"This gentleman is a friend of Lanza's and I've been telling him that we cannot afford to lower our prices."

"You forget, Signora," said Memmo, smiling, "that you have not yet mentioned your terms."

"Dear old Mammina. It may be better, Signore, to settle the matter with me. Mother cara, I know your intentions, but just set me right if I blunder."

Signora Beltrani's extravagantly high terms seemed to Memmo extremely low, and the surplus of twenty francs, which remained out of his monthly salary would cover his extra expenses.

Before leaving Piazza delle Isole he paid a week's rent, received the latchkey of the apartment, and

also a big key of the house door "which is never shut in the day and seldom at night."

Here in this little apartment, filled all day by Lorenza's laughter and song; in the parlor, fragrant with the scent of flowers, and bright with the setting sun; in his own scrupulously neat bedroom; at his window, opening on the garden, the distant Montenero and the wavy line of hills, Memmo spent many happy hours. Here he opened his heart to all the currents of life, making friends of all those whom he met, lavish of kind looks and cheering smiles. Clara's pet name for him became familiar, and he was "Memmo" to the poorest and humblest.

Here on the evening after D'Abbia's visit he was expected at dinner time by his kind-hearted bustling hostess and her pretty daughter.

The level beams of the golden April sun shone in through the open window, the piazza below swarmed with workmen coming home after their day's toil; further off was the wide sea, bright patched with changing hues of green and blue, under the fast fading glory of the setting sun.

These things rejoiced Signora Beltrani. She liked the familiar sounds that came up to her. The workmen calling or whistling to their housewives, the shrill laughter of girls, the shouts of lusty swains. But pleasantest of all sights and sounds was Renza sitting over her embroidery frame and whistling softly to herself.

"No mother, thank you. I don't want my scis-

sors. Memmo must see this. He has such a good eye for color."

"He is a Venetian, and your father always said that Venetians have a gift for color."

"It is lucky this new customer of yours is a Venetian too. She may appreciate your talent."

A light tap at the door. "What is the matter now, Rosita? You look scared as an unfledged sparrow!"

Indeed the child looked very much like a frightened bird, with her sharp profile under her shock of black hair, and her slender legs coming out of her ragged gown, as she stood stammering something about tomatoes which she had forgotten to buy for her father's macaroni.

"Bless you, child! It's too late now to prepare a tomato sauce. It takes a good hour simmering on the fire if you want it decently condensed."

"But surely, mother, you have some ready made."

Of course Sora Adele had the sauce prepared, and of course she obeyed her daughter's hint, and gave some to the child.

"Now tell me what you have been crying for, little one?"

Rosita protested that she had not been weeping, and Renza refrained from further questioning.

"Come and see my work. How do you like it now it is finished?"

The child clasped her hands in delight.

"I shall ask your father to let you learn from me. Do send him down to me when he comes home, will you?"

"He has come home already, but he went out again. He is out of work."

So that was the cause of Rosita's tears!

When she had left Signora Beltrani shook her head indignantly.

"That is the first gain from the strike! Out of work! Starving! Children crying and pining. This one can't endure it much longer!"

"No, she can't," echoed Renza with a sigh. "We must manage, somehow, to assist her—without offending Vigo, he is so jealous of his child's affection."

"Too much so," protested Signora Beltrani. "He has estranged her totally from her own mother. Goodness knows, I have no partiality for Maria—she is a stuck up signorina—but still she knows her business. With her Rosita would be well fed, and she would not get those awful bruises on her neck and arms."

"She is a sweet little thing!"

"No, not sweet, passionate. She would die for you or any one she loved but for her father she could even commit a crime. Vigo should have left her with her mother, when he could not keep her from want."

"He is proud and thinks Maria has wronged him."

"Proud! A man who can't keep the affection of his own wife, who does not remain a fortnight in any place! Proud! He is presuming! He presumes to be a popular leader and he cannot take care of his own child! I have no patience with Vigo. Think of that poor little face of Rosita's, so pinched and

scared. That child understands all the misery and shame of this world; she can't live long!"

On a warning cough from Renza, Signora Beltrani looked around and saw Vigo standing by the door.

"I have made bold to come in and warn you that your door was ajar. I saw it as I passed on my way upstairs."

Renza replied in her sweetest tones, "I'm glad you've come in, Vigo; I wanted to see you. Please take a chair near me."

With a polite bow Vigo came nearer the frame, but he did not sit down.

"This is an imitation of an ancient Venetian arazzo? I'm much mistaken if the original is not about three centuries old," he said.

"You have been wise in producing the colors, as they must have been in their first bloom. This sort of work ought to be well paid for; it is really artistic."

"I am glad of your approval, Vigo," said Renza, "because Mother and I have been discussing a plan—last night. It only lacks your consent to it."

Signora opened her eyes wide in astonishment.

"Well, Mother and I were saying that I lose a great deal of time in threading my needles, sorting my silks, running errands, and that if I could afford an apprentice I could accomplish more work. Your Rosita is old enough to take up a trade since you object to her going to school. We could not afford to pay but we could keep her."

"The child feels lonely when she is by herself all

day long; she likes to be with me, and I am very fond of her. It may be useful some day, for her to be able to earn her own living when you—are too old for work.”

“I am not likely to grow old,” Vigo’s voice was low and broken, “yet I do not like your plan. I want her far from the temptations that have ruined her mother, far from the evils of city life. Above all, I want her to keep away from the blasting influence of the rich. Would she were going about the fields and ploughing or making hay!”

“And dead in a week,” interrupted Signora. “Do you think that a delicate child like Rosita could stand exposure to the sun? Or sleep in a barn? Or feed on polenta and chestnut flour? She is made of mince-meat! She has taken from you a constitution all nerves and no stamina. I was a country girl myself and I know more about it than you have read in your books.”

Vacantly, as though he had been all this time following the thread of one idea, Vigo resumed:

“How can you endure to obey the whims of wealthy customers, who presume to give orders and directions because they have money and no understanding? Do you not resent this enslavement of the artist to the paymistress of the hour?”

“Nonsense! I give my work and they give their money. I am independent because there are few who can do this work. Now I feel sure that with me, Rosita has a fair opportunity of mastering my

art. Certainly," she added coaxingly, "she will be gently if not cleverly taught."

But Vigo's obstinacy was proof even against Renza's pleading.

"Ask Memmo's opinion," said Renza, "I hear him coming."

Memmo's presence was reflected on the brightened looks of all. Signora's eyes beamed maternal kindness, Vigo's intensely expressive, Renza's bashfulness and pleasure. Memmo pointed out a slight change which made her immediately thread her needle. He teased Signora Beltrani—whom he called "Sora Adele"—and he pretended that he was starved, and that she cruelly kept him waiting for his dinner.

"You waiting! In ten minutes your soup is ladled. And what soup! A cacciucco that contains seven different kinds of fish."

Memmo turned to Vigo.

"I heard that you have left your place. I have spoken to Tortellini. He thinks of starting business in your line. Meet me at the club to-night and we will talk the matter over."

Renza saw her opportunity and asked his support for her plan about Rosita.

"Of course you accept, Vigo. You are far too intelligent not to see the advantage for your child to be under the influence of Renza. You need not blush, Renza, I'm not going to praise you under your nose. The argument can keep; my dinner can't."

"Look at your watch, Memmo. Have you been here ten minutes? Dinner is ready!" called out Signora's triumphant voice.

"So you are going to have a 'prentice, Renza, going to make profit out of a poor child's work, like the grasping capitalists that you are, both of you. Only I mean to have a share in this speculation, Sora Adele, you must tell me what you think will be the cost of keeping Rosita."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Signora. "When there is enough for three there is enough for four. The child can have one good meal every day with us, and in the evening some supper with her father. It would not do to take her entirely off his hands."

"She is an interesting child," said Renza, "wayward and reticent beyond her age. I wonder how she comes to have such delicacy of feelings."

"I suppose that her father must once have been an intelligent and attractive man."

"Yet he does not seem to have been loved."

"That woman has much to answer for. Vigo's whole nature is perverted, his feelings embittered. That woman has committed a darker sin than if she had killed him."

They were sitting by the balcony, Memmo's eyes following idly in the air the wreaths of smoke from his cigarette, his mind following vaguely the wreaths of thoughts that had been haunting him with peculiar poignancy of late.

"I could not love unless I trusted implicitly. I could not change even if I tried."

There was a ring of emotion in these words which Renza felt, and her heart throbbed with sympathy as Memmo, unable to control his emotion, rose from his chair, and went out on the balcony. The fifth of May would be Clara's birthday, and she would be of age! Should he go to Venice? Would a letter reach her?

There he stood, ignoring the timid affection that thrilled the heart of the pretty girl at his elbow, rapt only in the fond dreams that could be so soon realized if Clara also wished it.

The quiet of evening was falling over the land. The solemn song of the sea came to Memmo with the scent of the salt breeze, mixed with the fragrance of flowers, recalling Venetian evenings on the balcony overlooking the Canale Grande. Would Clara write to him? Send for him?

The fulness of Memmo's heart was such that he turned to Renza for sympathy. He would have poured in those pure innocent ears the story of his love. Renza raised her face to Memmo's; he read there a comprehension, and impulsively he clasped her hand in his.

"Renza, you are as good as you are pretty. Certainly you understand me." He checked himself suddenly. "No!" he stammered. "I have not the right to speak—as yet."

Overcome with emotion, Renza did not dare reply; too dazed even to read her own thoughts she stood there as one in a trance, dreaming of intoxicating and unexpected glory.

CHAPTER XI

ALL the world seemed music and sunshine when Renza rose the next morning and prepared for her walk to Ardenza.

What did his words mean? How could Memmo care for an insignificant person like herself. Could she presume to look up so high? Could she ever become worthy of his regard? Busy with these thoughts under her mother's watchful eye she began her toilet.

"Am I all right, Mother?"

"You are a darling!"

Then after an amount of kissing and embracing that might have done for a long journey, after the whispered reiteration of all the popular exorcisms against the evil eye:

"Don't worry, Mother, I'll take good care of myself."

Absorbed in pleasant thoughts, strange happy sensations, Renza walked briskly. The spring sunshine extending over the expanse of tilled land on her right hand, the wavy line of hills in the distance, the white villages clustering round the sanctuary of Montenero, mingled brightly with the evanescent dreams and vague visions of a future which she dared not grasp and construe into a distinct hope.

But after awhile she felt saddened by some subtle influence. Men walked the streets in working clothes, though they carried no tools. Jackets were not thrown loosely over their shoulders, hats were cocked defiantly over scowling foreheads; the voices sounded muffled and constrained. But that which jarred most sensibly with Renza's experience was that few children were running about and few women looking out of window.

Renza noticed other things that were not new, but which now impressed her for the first time. The miserable houses, the small windows, the overcrowding. The poverty usually disguised by active toil, or the boisterous merriment of holidays, was now revealed in the silence and stillness of this glaring Spring day. As she stopped and looked round her for some familiar face and some explanation, she heard the tramp of many feet behind her. She saw eight brethren of the Misericordia in their black robes and cowls, carrying a hurdle, these black hooded figures, with their cowls dropped over their faces and the ominous weight swinging above their heads.

She noted with relief that the tarpaulin was of green cloth, and not black for the dead or for a contagious disease.

She followed the little procession as it turned down a short side street and stopped in front of a dismal many storied house, whose crumbling façade showed shutterless windows and a gaping door. Four of the hooded men went up with the stretcher,

while the other four stood silent round the hurdle by the door.

Several women looked at a window on the third floor.

"Now you don't tell me that Maria della Mora is going to the hospital?" said one woman.

"Why shouldn't she?" said a sallow-faced girl. "How could they keep her at home? All through the winter they have been selling or pawning every rag they possessed, and now there is no knowing how long the strike may go on, nor how it will end."

"La Mora is a shrewd one," whispered an elderly crone. "She knows that by the end of the week there will not be an empty bed in the hospital."

"Why!" exclaimed Renza, coming up. "Is there any infection?"

"The worst of all infections," snarled the hag. "There's starvation! That damned strike will ruin us all! A plague on those dogs who have started it! They want to fish in troubled waters no matter who sinks to make bait. Honest people have nothing left but to pack their clothes for Monte di Pieta, their sick ones for the hospital, their little ones for the dogs!"

"Hush!" whispered the elderly woman. "Here's old Maria already abroad."

Silence fell on the women; eyes turned toward the dark doorway. Presently a woman wrapped in a shawl appeared, carrying under her arm a bundle of clothes.

She stood blinking in the sun, awed by the eyes of

so many of her victims. Her watery eyes glanced around, her toothless jaws munching wickedly, then a cruel smile came to her livid lips as she read the terror in these faces. Steadying her bundle on her hip she walked away, keeping close to the wall, until she turned into the high road and disappeared.

When she was safely out of sight and hearing, the invective burst out against her.

"That daughter of a god! Blood-sucking louse! Harvest days for her when the poor are in trouble! May she die of apoplexy and rot in a ditch!"

Now the hooded brethren came down the slippery stairs and into the blinding sunshine. The stretcher was carefully lifted onto the hurdle, and both noiselessly raised on the men's shoulders. Under the raised canvas appeared a face, white, corpse-like and rigid from which great black eyes stared with despair.

Then from a window of the third floor, a shrill cry rang out in the heavy silence, "Maria! Figlia mia!"

No feature moved on that death-like face, only the black eyes rolled back, while the brethren marched away with regular swing and cadenced step toward the town.

With heavy heart Renza proceeded in the opposite direction. She walked quickly, her eyes bent to the ground, shrinking from further sights of misery. Why should such cruel things happen? Was Vigo right when he called for a total destruction of all society?

She had got beyond the borough and was following a solitary lane, when she was startled as four horses with their grooms almost galloped over her.

How sleek the horses under their glittering trappings, how smart the red-faced grooms in their red waistcoats. The trappings on the horses, the caps of the grooms, all bore the double crowned "A" of the D'Abbia livery.

Renza's bitterness took a more definite form. Were these the causes or only the results of the misery endured by so many people?

The impression was further intensified when, on entering the Villa grounds by the back gate, she saw the magnificent gardens.

"Let me show you up to the house," said a young gardener, "Come round by this avenue and see the new aviary."

Renza gazed with admiration on the gilded cages filled with exotic plants and rare birds; gorgeous creatures of strange forms and iridescent colors.

"I call that a royal whim. Do you see that cockatoo there, with that funny tuft on its head? It cost two hundred francs; and there are others worth more. Madonna di Dio! You could keep a hundred persons with the money that goes to buy and feed these creatures."

Renza's face was her answer.

"Well," said the boy, shrugging his shoulders. "It's no use kicking against a wall."

They passed on before the spacious kennels, the

monumental stables and hothouses; the boy winked confidentially, Renza gazed with mixed feelings.

"Here you are, Signorina; in the servants' office, you will find someone to introduce you."

In the servants' office was a group of contadini surrounding Giovanni, the butler.

Stout and pompous in a plush waistcoat and shirt sleeves, Giovanni was holding up against the light a glass of wine, and smacking his lips with the aplomb of a connoisseur.

"You know," he said patronizingly to the contadini, "that this is not the same stuff you sent last month. However, I persuade the padrone that it is as good!"

"You are a shrewd fellow, Giovanni, and for you there will be a pipe of the real stuff," said one of the peasants, clapping his hand on Giovanni's.

It seemed to Renza that a folded note passed from one palm into the other. But Giovanni, having seen her, advanced, strutting.

"The Signorina is expected by la Signora Contessa."

He put on his coat and led Renza, across a narrow passage, into the central hall.

"I dare say you never saw anything half so beautiful. Real quattrocento wainscoting and authentic wrought iron fittings from San Gemignano." He patted his stomach with satisfaction. "I would not stay in a house where there were no beautiful things to show to a visitor."

"On the right hand the apartment of the master,

those of the Contessa in the left wing, in front is the dining room and a suite of smoking, billiard and library rooms, all opening on the conservatory."

The tiny corner room, in which Renza was told to wait, was the last one on the left.

"I beg your pardon, Signorina, for keeping you waiting," said a low and musical voice, and Renza saw Clara D'Abbia, her slim figure, graceful and stately in the ample folds of a morning gown, her faultless profile enhanced by the pallor of her cheek. She beckoned to Renza to come and sit by her side on a low settee between two windows.

"Have you, indeed, finished my arazzo! How kind of you, and how clever you are! You are a real artist, Signorina; and I would like to consult you about something else I want to undertake."

She opened an album. "Look here! I have discovered several cartoons presumably draughted by Leonardo—by order of Duchess Isabella d'Este. Shall we undertake this difficult reconstruction?"

Renza's face glowed at the prospect.

"If you will go out by the front gate, I'll walk with you along the avenue," proposed Clara, when Renza rose to go.

Across the lawn, they strolled leisurely, Renza forgetting her shyness, Clara beaming kindness, both radiant with beauty and grace, both charming, two embodiments of youth. And they walked on, awed into silence by a vague feeling of some strange presence.

Renza's lithe figure grew indistinct in the growing

distance, and Clara stood wistfully gazing after her. How gladly she would have changed places with this hard working girl, who could mention her mother with such affection, and blush so innocently when asked if she had a sposo.

As in answer to her meditations, Clara saw a man walk up from the distant gate and speak to Renza. Clara only discerned Renza's prettily shy acknowledgment of his parting salute, then he raised his hat and Clara saw—Memmo, or his ghost!

Nearer and nearer he advanced, his tall figure, developed and commanding. Breathless, she gazed. It was indeed Memmo. With a cry she rushed into his arms.

CHAPTER XII

ACROSS the blinds, tightly closed to credit the announcement of his departure, slanting arrows of light glanced on the overturned tables and chairs and general wreckage in D'Abbia's smoking room; silent testimony of the master's fury.

On the desk, among flasks of cognac and glasses, candle-burners for Tuscan cigars, and overturned ash trays, there lay the litter of that morning's post bag, letters and telegrams. As he tossed them aside, or selecting one of them, reread it for the twentieth time, his alcoholic brain realized that through all his checkered career he had never faced a more desperate crisis. Ill management, extravagance, gambling and debauch had brought them to an appalling climax.

Since yesterday, events had rushed toward a downfall, every prop gave way at the same moment. That rascally mob-leader, that socialist "intrigante parolaio" who had seemed so willing to accept the bribe, had sent in his stead, a commission of rough-tongued, insane workmen who pretended to dictate terms, "Curse him with all his evil deceased parents," growled Augusto, who had learned to swear in every dialect of the Peninsula.

Then Daniele Sparnieri had refused all assistance,

declined to extend credit at the Banca, and merely offered to come down and give advice, "Damn the sly old fox! I want his money not his infernal meddling!" Then he sought relief from the brandy bottle and a strong Tuscan cigar.

From the secret drawer of his desk he drew out a variety of documents. Here was a confidential note from the Director of the Banca d'Italia: it gave notice that the last three cheques had not been honored, that the last promissory note had been held for reasons "that were better stated viva voce." Yet they had taken others that had been no better! "Either they have smelt the stink of a corpse or Master Daniele has put in his filthy little paw."

He picked up another letter, "Why, every lewd fly will assail a jaded horse. Here this princess of the public sewer who has gouged me out of thousands now, for a paltry set of diamonds I have borrowed of her, and pawned, she assumes the airs of an offended Lucrezia Romana and dares speak of the police court and prison . . . to me! Why! I gave her these very diamonds! Here's Settepassi's unpaid bill testifying to it."

He pushed back the drawer violently and locked it: Why look over the other threatening notes? Like an animal at bay, he was hedged round by a pack of snarling curs, they barked at him now, they would soon be biting and tearing, unless some miracle saved him from their fangs. Why had evil fortune marred all his best plans? He had done nothing that a man in his position was not expected to do? A fellow

can't avoid the card table if he belongs to a smart club! A man can't make a laughing stock of himself among his chums by separating from an acknowledged mistress. The failure of his marriage was proof of this persistent "jettatura" pursuing him. He had been so cleverly fooled by Daniele, that he could not lay his hand on one hundred francs beyond his fixed allowance. True this allowance might even have sufficed to cover his daily expenses if there had not been those past escapades which drained his purse. That beastly pack of jackals! The blackmailing money-lenders, who had gladly accepted his worthless bonds, and had encouraged him to forge his father's signature on promissory notes, must now be bribed not to bring criminal prosecutions.

He was very clever, at such card games as required a cool head and nimble fingers "Goffetto and Faraone." But of late Augusto had felt so unnerved, so clumsy that he dared not risk being caught in a serious deal. Now, these mills were dragging him down. The smash was complete! He must blow out his brains as the one way of escape.

Augusto D'Abbia eyed the pistol on his desk but he did not touch it. It was the coward's fear of pain.

Another and not less appalling way of escape was an appeal to his wife! He saw himself standing before Clara a culprit, a beggar, and his heart failed him.

The debauchee, the gambler, the sensual egotist

and rake had one shred of self respect left, one curb to his depraved instincts: his wife, whose voice suggested pure thoughts and chaste desires.

Up to this moment he had shielded her from the knowledge of his real position as he had tried to disguise from her the vulgarity and baseness of his nature. Yet now it was only by facing her scorn that he could hope to spare her a revelation of the full truth, the scandal and public exposure that were threatening him and the name that she bore. He called to the servant in the antechamber.

"Giovanni! Ask the Signora Contessa if she will grant me an interview in the library immediately after dinner."

Giovanni opened the door and Clara walked in.

The rustle of her trailing silks, the glitter of diamonds, her subtle perfume thrilled Augusto's pulses even as he bowed to her and attended her to the chair.

Clara settled in her chair and there was silence.

"I apologize for having troubled you," said Augusto at last, "and I thank you for complying with my request."

Clara inclined her head.

"I suppose that the best way for me to appreciate your kindness is to shorten this interview and state my object briefly."

Another sign of acquiescence from Clara, whose heart throbbed with apprehension. Had she been forestalled in the communication she meant to make?

Would Augusto's next words be an accusation and an assertion of his conjugal rights?

"The fact is," said Augusto abruptly, "I want your financial assistance.

"I dare to make this appeal to you because I know that you will prefer loss of money to the shame that might react on you in the case of my bankruptcy."

"I will give you financial assistance that was a part of the terms I accepted, but I am not concerned by your failure." Clara's contempt was a provocation to Augusto's desperate mood. "State your demand as briefly as you can."

Even as she turned round to look into his face Augusto's maddening jealousy was exasperated by the sight of her radiant beauty.

"You are merciless to a ruined man, yet those of your race might have taught you how to deal with a scapegrace in embarrassment."

"Do you choose this moment to insult my people? I understand that you have something else to tell me." He was at her mercy. "What is the precise sum of money you want?"

He covered his face with his hands. "I must have nine hundred thousand francs immediately."

"Debts of . . . honor? Then how much for business?"

"The Mills are going to the dogs . . . or worse, will fall into Daniele's hands . . . unless . . . I fill the gaps . . . satisfy the bankers . . . raise the wages . . . of these scoundrels. . ."

"How much?"

"A round million!" he exclaimed desperately.

"And," Clara's fingers clutched the arms of her chair, "How much more to obtain your consent to my release?"

Stunned! He strove to speak.

"Are you not now sufficiently free? Can you complain?"

"I do not complain. Up to this moment you have observed our contract. I now want to be released from my marriage."

"You want to be legally separated?"

"Yes, immediately! Afterwards I want a divorce."

"There is no divorce in Italy."

"There is everything for those who have influence and money. Through naturalization in another country a divorce can be obtained. Other people have done so. You must now listen to my terms. You shall at once provoke a legal separation by deserting me and your house, so as to afford a complaint of your misbehavior. You will easily find an . . . accomplice. Then the Sparnieri firm will provide you with funds to purchase in your name an estate in Austria and forward a demand for Austrian naturalization. Two months later, we can have the divorce by mutual consent pronounced by an Austrian magistrate and you cash another million."

"You make light of the most sacred bond that——"

"There is no sacredness in a bond that was forged by fraud. I was deceived, else I would not have married you. I now claim the right of following my heart."

"Who is the fortunate rival who has inspired this sudden resolution?"

"My cousin, Guglielmo Sparnieri, who having discarded that name now bears his mother's: Deleani."

"That camorrist!"

Clara rose to her feet, very pale.

"Do not dare to discuss my cousin. If you do not consent to my proposal I will leave your house and go and live with him. I am ready to pay you for the sake of avoiding public gossip."

His finger joints cracked, he bit his lips until his mouth was filled with blood.

"Clara! For pity's sake. I'll promise to——"

"Spare your words. Is it yes, or no?"

Augusto smiled ironically, as he raised her hand to his lips with a courtly bow.

"Signora, your orders will be obeyed."

"You give your word of honor? Do you swear upon your mother's head?"

"I do."

"Prepare your order. I will sign it."

She swept from the room and slowly walked across the hall and up the stairs, but when safe within her own room, she was again a happy, panting, breathless girl of twenty, who wept childish tears of joy as she scribbled a note of incoherent

delight to her playfellow, whom she had but so lately learned to love as a sweetheart. She asked him to come at once to hear some happy news, and she suggested that he meet her in the Conservatory after dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE glory of early May pouring in from the kitchen window, shone on Renza as she stood at her washing tub; it glistened on the copper vessels that hung along the wall; the canary sang loudly in its cage amid the roses at the window.

On a charcoal fire the soup bubbled gaily and the bird sang as though its little throat would burst for joy; Renza lifted the clothes from the cauldron, twisted and set them on a trestle, dripping glistening drops, and Renza sang too. Her clear voice filled the room, and flowed down into the garden below, up into the bright sunshine above, some joyous spirit of love and youth pervaded all.

Why did she feel so? Memmo had not proposed, he had not shown impatience to meet her, yet he was changed, in looks, in voice. He was more human, less the visionary separated from other men and from her own timid self. And Renza dared to hope that it meant love for her. It was sweet torment, these first flutterings of her heart. She was elated yet awed at the thought of Memmo's love; at the prospect of marrying a signore and such a famous man; as his wife she knew she would feel intensely proud with everyone else, but how humble and submissive with him.

Filled with such thoughts she worked bravely. Her bare arms covered with fleecy suds strained as they lifted the cauldron filled with water and emptied it into the acquaic, then she carried the dripping clothes to the window and fastened them to a rope by means of the cappietti; she whistled and sang as she pulled on the rope, stirring the bird to loud and happy rivalry. It was only when Sora Adele had called twice that she turned and saw her frightened mother leaning against the door post, panting.

"Why, Mother! What is the matter?"

"Renza mia! Renza mia! I thought I would never see you again! Madonna santa di Montenero, I thank you! Now, cara, don't look so distressed! I'm all right, but I think of what might have been."

If it was a case of "what might have been" Renza recovered from her fright insisting that her mother should drink some water to which she added a few drops of acqua antisterica, the panacea of all Tuscan housewives. These restoratives soon recalled Signora to her usual cheerful spirits; she straightened the black lace over her white hair, smiled, and hugged her daughter with more than usual tenderness.

"Oh dear me! If I had remembered that you were busy on this side of the house I might have spared myself such trouble and worry. What dreadful sights you might have seen if you had been in the parlor."

"What has happened?"

"A revolution! They are fighting in the streets! Barricades! The cavalry have charged the people!"

"Mother, you are dreaming! Such things cannot happen in Leghorn! You have taken fireflies for lanterns!"

"Fireflies! Fireflies! When I tell you I saw the horses trampling down the people in Piazza Grande! I heard the pistol shots! True, I didn't wait to be shot."

"Mother! This is dreadful!"

Signora sipped another spoonful of her restorative.

"I was in the market, bargaining for a pair of pigeons, when someone slapped my shoulder. I turned round; it was Maria pretending to thank me for her daughter, but who only waited to abuse Vigo. That woman is a viper! She persuades the child to spite her father. The shameless creature! She has no delicacy with all her pride and her grand airs. She is a hypocrite!"

"Let Maria alone, Mother. What happened?"

"Maria persuaded me to go with her to Gonnelli's shop in Piazza Grande, saying she would recommend me to the seller. The Piazza was crowded! Swarming! I never saw it that way. Not even on Corpus Domini, when the procession is allowed to go round! There was a noise, something like the roar of waves, all hands were turned toward the Prefettura and I pushed my way up to the middle of the Piazza and then I could see that someone was speaking from the central balcony of the Prefettura."

"The Prefetto was haranguing the mob?"

"No, not he. He is stout and tall, while this one was a little mannikin with a squeaking voice. 'Why does that fool keep on speaking since no one listens to him?' said I to a man. 'Why? Because he is a fool,' answered the man; then several people around us laughed. It was just like Sunday afternoon when the military band is playing. Now and then a cheer came from under the windows of the Prefettura and sometimes a growl. They told me the Board of Labor had sent deputies to ask for a reduction of the duty on wheat. Did you know the duty is one-third of the whole price! Suddenly a loud whistle was heard and then cries of 'abasso' and calls for the Prefetto.

"'The Prefetto has gone to Rome,' said the man who had spoken first. 'He went last night to ask for orders. That baboon up there is only irritating the mob. He tells them white bread is a delicacy and that maize polenta is just as wholesome!' At that moment the cries grew louder and shrill whistles were heard, and then a flourish of trumpets was sounded! O, Renza! I was so glad you were not there! People swarmed like flies in autumn. I stood stupefied, but the man who had been speaking caught my arm. 'Hurry up, good woman; don't wait for the second flourish. They'll fire immediately after!' I ran after him, we had almost reached the corner when the second flourish was sounded; immediately after it came the tramp of the horses and the crack of pistol shots, and all the avenues

were guarded by carabinieri. But I did not stop to see what happened, I followed a group of persons running toward Via della Posta. I rushed into an open door and ten or twelve other persons squeezed in, and then we shut the door and stood still in the dark."

"O, Mother! In the dark! In an unknown house."

"Worse than unknown. We listened to the rush of people outside, then we heard the gallop of horses, then stillness. After awhile the street was empty except for a patrol at the corner. I was so anxious to see you that I would not listen to warning. The sentinels could not take me for a rebel, could they?"

Renza laughed, and kissed her mother.

"Madonna mia! What a run that was! I wonder what turnings I took. I was mad with anxiety about you. Now all my bones ache so! I feel as if I had a fit of *perniciosa*."

Yet for all her weariness Signora Beltrani would not sit still and rest.

If anything, suspense seemed to have excited her energy. From kitchen to parlor, from door to balcony, she hurried about dusting, scrubbing, sweeping and cooking between intervals of loquacity.

But Renza did not ask about Memmo. She too surveyed the Piazza and the distant *Passeggiata*. Both empty by a charge of cavalry and now guarded at every corner by patrols of bersaglieri, under the command of police officers. The clank of muskets on the ground with every change of sentinels, the

brief orders, were the only noises. No one was allowed to stop in the Piazza, only a few solitary figures crept from house to house, only a few heads peeped from windows. Pale and haggard women's faces, sullen and scowling men's faces, all of them bewildered and bitter.

Further off, on the Passeggiata, some carabinieri on horseback formed a brilliant row of white buffle, red cloth and plumed hats.

Presently she was relieved by the sight of Rosita crossing the Piazza.

"Where have you been, child? This is not a day for you to be running about!"

Without answering Rosita slipped into her place near Renza and busied herself with silks and needles.

"I have been in town," she whispered. "There I heard that Memmo is in conference with the workmen, trying to arrange things."

Relieved by this information Renza asked if Vigo had gone out.

"No. He is busy at home, preparing some materials for his work."

A loud ring startled the three and sent Signora to the door, while Renza sat with her needle in the air and Rosita trembled. Then Signora's voice rose in tones of welcome:

"Do come in, Giovanni Arrivabene! I am glad to see your father's son in my house. Renza, my dear, here is an old friend."

Blushing and beaming with cordiality, Sora Adele showed her visitor into the parlor.

"Think, Renza, of a visitor coming on such a day, straight from San Gemignano! The son of my old friend, Pietro Arrivabene!"

Smiling at the pretty girl who rose to salute him, Nanni stood on the threshold, and bowed, the picture of health and good nature, and glistening white teeth that shone between red lips.

"Is it funny," continued Signora, "that I once held him in my lap and that I should not know him!"

"That must have happened some time ago," said Renza, with a peal of laughter.

"When I was three years old, according to my father's account."

Nanni joined in Renza's laugh.

"Come sit down and make yourself comfortable. Here, now tell us what good wind has blown you down from your hills to Livano."

"I have come on business. Father wants me to sell the produce of our bit of land directly to exporters."

"Bit of land, you call it! Why you have the best tilled and largest tenuta in the district," commented Signora, helping herself to a second glass of Marsala. "I can speak of it. I romped about it every day of my life. What glorious times we had during the vintage! What parties in the fields during the hay-making!"

"Yet you deserted our country and came to live in this stifling city!"

"Fate, my dear boy! Fate! We are but leaves in the storm! We go there and we stick here; we are tossed about as it pleases Above. Well! There are pleasant turnings in the road now and then, and this unexpected meeting with the son of my best friend and playfellow, is one."

"You might add of your rejected lover, Sora Adele!"

"Madonna! What a chatterbox that Pietro always was!"

"Your mother is still remembered at San Gemignano," said Nanni, turning to Renza. "People talk of her round the lamp in winter, of her pretty ways and beauty. My father has never quite recovered from his disappointment."

"For shame, Mother! You must have been an awful flirt!"

"The prettiest girl they can remember," added Nanni. "That explains how"—He did not finish his sentence, glanced at Renza, then again at her mother with a meaning look.

"Now, Sora Adele," he fell so easily into the familiar diminutives. "I want you to help me out of a difficulty. On arriving in your inhospitable town, I found neither trams nor bus at the station. They keep the first of May here as strictly as Englishmen keep Sunday. I expect to stay here for a fortnight and I positively object to your city hotels."

"What sort of a boarding house do you want?" asked Signora, with a glance at Renza. "A very fashionable place?"

No, Nanni wanted nothing of that sort? A quiet, decent, respectable house.

"Well, then, there is only one in the town that I can safely recommend and that is kept by your servant." She rose and curtesied gravely.

Nanni was delighted. Renza guessed that he had premeditated his little plan, and that he would have been equally pleased with any other room as he was with the one her mother showed him, which opened on the parlor opposite to Memmo's. She did not like the notion of this young man staying with them, yet she dared not deprive her mother of both pleasure and profit. She went out on the balcony. In the growing twilight she discovered a man standing under her balcony. He looked up; it was Vigo.

"Renza," he called in a cautious whisper, "Is Rosita with you? Will you keep her until I call for her?"

There was such an accent of entreaty in these simple words:

"Of course I will. Why not?"

"As you care for her, as you would save her from an awful danger, do not let her go out to-night! Above all, do not allow her to go to her mother."

Renza promised and withdrew.

When the evening lamp had been lighted after dinner it shone on a quiet party. Signora Beltrani believed that panic-stricken, fleeing crowds had been pursued in the streets by the cavalry, that women and children had been trampled under the horses' hoofs or shot by soldiers; she told of

persons arrested, and of hospitals crowded with wounded, and in the silence of the street, in the glare of camp fires lighted on the Piazza, the most incredible stories seemed real.

Renza, anxiously listened for Memmo's step. He had sent word that he would not be in for dinner, that he might leave for Florence. Even Nanni's boisterous spirits lost some of their gaiety. He felt timid and clumsy when he looked at Renza. The more he admired her the more bashful he became.

Somehow it was not easy to speak soft speeches and compliments to this girl. Yet he had a reputation even among the proudest signorine of San Gemignano. But Renza was not like them; she could look straight into his face and answer him without the timid blush or the affected giggle that provincial manners dictated. She did not always wait for him to address her, but spoke freely, composedly, her refinement as well as her cordiality was that of a higher social class than the humble surroundings justified.

"Well, things seem to be very quiet now. There's not a cat stirring on the streets except the soldiers. But the consequences of these riots that are reported in other cities may bring upon us the terrible calamity of martial law."

"But can an entire populace be thus gagged without a vote of Parliament?"

"Yes, a royal decree can do it. They are enacted without one hour's delay."

"A Russian ukase," said Renza with a deep sigh.

"What gain can ever come from these outbursts? Trade was not so lively, before this, but now! I am afraid, Nanni, you may not find it easy to do your business here."

"I can wait. Father is in no hurry to sell and I am in no hurry to go, unless—unless—Sora Adele, you think I am too much trouble."

So the hours passed, bringing no comfort to Renza ever listening for the well known step on the stairs, bringing no peace to the anxiety that shone from Rosita's restless eyes.

"Why do you sit up so late, child," said Signora. "You look so tired."

"I must not go home until father comes for me."

"Well then, lie down on the sofa and sleep?" said Renza. "I will call you as soon as I hear him coming."

Rosita obeyed and curled up her small figure on the sofa, and remained so quiet they thought her asleep, and whispered.

"I dare say we might all of us go to bed," said Signora. "Memmo has taken the train to Florence as he expected to."

"How do you know?"

"He said we should not expect him unless he came in by half past ten. It is now quarter past eleven."

Renza was relieved.

"That child can't stand this sort of life," grumbled Signora. "She is running to her grave, full gallop. She was up all last night and is always

in suspense and terror of her father getting into mischief. I wonder what he may be up to."

"Having a row with Maria," whispered Renza.

Signora, having indulged in a short nap, roused herself, "I wonder how late it is?"

As Nanni pulled out his watch and Renza looked at the clock which was about to chime half past eleven, a muffled sound was heard in the distance and the house shook.

"Gesù! Giuseppe e Maria!" ejaculated Signora Beltrani. "This is cannon!"

"Earthquake rather," breathed Nanni.

Renza turned pale but she raised her hand for silence. Far away cries were heard, then a short report.

"That was a pistol," said Nanni.

They rushed to the balcony and peered into the night. Away in the direction of Ardenza, to the South, they could see lights moving about. Shrieks and whistles were vaguely heard.

On re-entering the room Signora noticed that Rosita was gone.

"Madonna di Dio! She has gone after that rascally father of hers!"

"Dear me! Vigo has warned me so earnestly not to let her go there!"

"If you'll tell me where to go I'll run after her and bring her back to you, Signorina," said Nanni, eagerly.

Renza's look of relief had already paid Nanni for his pains. Then Renza pointed out to him the way

to Villa D'Abbia—all along the Passeggiata, the last monumental gate, in front of the pineta. Rosita had certainly stopped at the lodge where her mother lived. Nanni walked briskly into the starlit night, elated by the prospect of obliging Renza, and glad to get a little exercise after being all day indoors.

The avenue was deserted. The sentinels posted at every turning were dosing. Only as he came nearer to Ardenza he was stopped by a police agent and asked for his name and errand.

"A little girl, you say? Yes, we saw one pass. You may ask at the gate but you won't be allowed to get in."

The gate was guarded by a patrol of soldiers and a group of servants.

"I don't ask to get in," said Nanni, "I only want to know if the lodge-keeper's daughter has come in. I'm related to the child. I want to know she is safe."

The officer growled:

"Here, Pietrino, come and give some information.

Pietrino, advancing, said, "Yes, Rosita is here. We found her in the grounds lying in a dead faint on a flower bed close by the conservatory. She must have come across the hedge." Pietrino lowered his voice to whisper. "Are you sent by her father?" he asked.

"No, by the Beltrani."

"Then tell Sora Adele not to worry; the child is safe with Maria, but it will be no use trying to speak to her now. Rosita must have been very near the

spot where the shell exploded; she is likely to have seen the man who laid it."

"What shell?"

"Why the shell that has blown up a window and a terrace here and—only—wounded our master."

"Perbacco! That is dreadful."

"Yes, for the poor devils who have already been arrested."

"The right one, of course, is off!"

"Let us hope so," the boy whispered. Then aloud, "My compliments to Signora Adele and her daughter."

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM that first great cry as they met, to the last lingering kiss with which Clara had bid Memmo depart and leave her to prepare for their marriage, only a few minutes had elapsed, yet they had contained for Memmo every emotion that can crush and yet elate a loving heart. He had seen Clara and learned her passionate love for him, yet she was married to another man. She bore a name that was not his, yet with the memory of the love in her eyes, and that kiss, he knew her to be now and forever his. The shock of contrasting emotions left him only conscious of this supreme joy, that he had found her, that she loved him and that nothing could part them.

Now as he tried to grasp the situation, he realized the marvelous change in himself.

His brotherly tenderness had blazed into ardent love in the moment when he held her panting and weeping, when she clung to him in the abandon of love. In that blessed instant, he knew that no law or custom could divide them.

Memmo's object now was to spare Clara as much as possible from the difficulties of the situation. Since she wrote telling him to meet her on that same evening, he inferred that she had resolved to act

immediately, to ignore public opinion, and to at once leave her husband's house. He loved her the more for this courage.

A short storm of gossip and legal proceedings, then a future of unbroken peace.

He reproached himself bitterly for having played into Daniele's hands, yet there were extenuating reasons. His suspicion that they were father and daughter had inspired Memmo with a certain reliance in Daniele's fitness to deal with his "ward."

When he had promised to keep away from Clara Memmo had never supposed that Daniele would hide from her either his change of name or his irregular birth. There had been several letters exchanged with lawyers and with Daniele himself, and of course Clara must have heard.

Clara had turned to him in the hour of distress, but as her letter had been directed to him under the name of Sparnieri, he had never received it. Poor dear loving heart, how sad must have been her deception!

But why, then, had this monstrous crime been committed? What passion stronger than paternal love, than financial interest had determined this abominable alliance? Daniele was a villain but not a fool, yet this marriage with Augusto D'Abbia was idiotic. Daniele had some sense of delicacy since he had preserved Clara's innocence from the revelation of her mother's sin; why then had he thrown her into the arms of a debauchee.

He shuddered as he thought of Clara, delivered

over to a base villain, by the father who should have watched over her and protected her.

Memmo could well understand how, writhing under the exquisite pain of that shameful discovery, impulsive Clara, had rushed into the snare, choosing this hated marriage as a means of exit from that contaminated household.

But even in her desperate situation, she had saved herself from contamination. Her purity had proved stronger than their united wickedness.

Clara must leave Villa D'Abbia at once, but where could she go? Not to one of those crowded hotels where she would be stared at or talked about by every visitor.

A villa in the neighborhood, would be the fittest for Clara. The Romito had been meant for a buen retiro and had been fitted accordingly. It was secluded, yet accessible. The massive Medicean castle rose on the brow of rock overhanging the sea. It contained a suite of rooms, furnished and arranged with comfort.

A half hour on his bicycle brought Memmo to the Romito. He was enchanted with the quiet of the place. No sound but the murmuring sea below, and the light rustle of the tamarisks on the road; an Eden of solitude only four miles from town.

Memmo's knock was answered by a woman with wooden "zocoli" on her feet and a red kerchief on her head who came out of the "portineria" at the call. She showed the way upstairs, and volunteered much information.

Memmo arranged for a long lease and spoke about buying the place.

A bottle of Marsala sealed the bargain, and Memmo drank with the old couple and chatted with them.

The woman told him, how a lady, beautiful as an angel, splendid as a queen came there, and how the master had suddenly gone away, and how the woman had come back "as people go to weep on the graves of the dead."

"It is a sad story, and when I lie awake in my bed at night and the waters roar at the foot of the terrace and the breakers groan under the frothing sea, it seems to me that I hear the voice of the poor dear lady sobbing and moaning in the room that was theirs—their nest!"

Memmo lingered about the place, picturing the sweet hours he would pass here with Clara. On this terrace they would sit and have those endless talks which must make up for long separation; there a little boat for dreamy hours on the sunlit sea. This dining room, so small, should hold them in the pleasant autumnal evenings. Of any greater intimacy, Clara alone must decide. It was something too solemn, too sacred, even for contemplation.

In vain Memmo sought to still the eager surge of his blood; in vain he tried to recall his affection; the idea of Clara's beauty forced him to follow the enchanting phantoms of his imagination, and the sun sank slowly westward, and the waves lapped

at his feet, and blithe tamarisks nodded their plumes in the breeze.

At last the sun approached the western horizon. The waves changed their glad song to the solemn chant of night; the sunset painted by the thought of God, spread over sea and land, like a blazing on castle walls. Memmo's heart was full as he made his way back to the town, steeped in the glory of first love.

A distant bell chiming ten sent him flying toward the pine grove in front of the villa, where he stood in the dark, watching an opportunity to enter.

The back door of the conservatory was open, he entered cautiously and found himself in darkness. Presently he distinguished the mass of foliage, and when a faint moonbeam shone, a red light glittered across a stained glass door at the end of the central aisle. Memmo guessed from the sounds behind it that it must be the dining room.

There was a slight movement of the stained glass door, and then a white figure. Clara's arms were around his neck, Clara's head nestled against his heart!

Clara reeled under the emotion of this first revelation of herself, she felt that her very soul was passing into Memmo! She clung to him for support. Their lips joined once more in the mute communion.

Reverently Memmo kissed from her eyes the tears of surfeiting love.

She clung closer to him, she buried her face against his, then she looked up and tried to speak.

"I have such good news to tell you! O, Memmo, we meet never more to part!"

Then Memmo told of the nest prepared for her, where they would forget past suffering and live for one another in endless love.

"We will be very poor and very happy."

"Memmo, take me with you at once."

But Memmo, whose every nerve strained toward the woman nestling in his arms, must be prudent for her sake. He must save her from scandal. Then Clara entreated him to come to her every day.

"No, Clara, that cannot be. Would you have me steal like a robber into a man's house? Would you have your servants suspect you?"

Clara's cheek pressed against his, and her lips were close to his ear: "My master is right and he must be obeyed."

"The first thing now, is to have all these troublesome proceedings ended as quickly as possible. Listen, carissima, I will run up to Florence and bring back Lanza, whom I entirely trust. He can see you openly, as your legal adviser and keep me fully informed."

Both felt it was time to part.

"We meet at Romito, dear. Let me know the minute you get there."

One last, one last embrace and Clara hastened toward the red glass door.

Memmo looking after her, saw her suddenly turn round. He met her panting:

"There is someone there!" she whispered pointing to the plants outside.

Memmo perceived a slight movement hardly distinguishable from the fluttering leaves.

On the terraced window, lighted vividly from behind, Memmo saw two silhouettes, Daniele leaning against the frame, Augusto D'Abbia on the railing. Suddenly the shadow of a man came from the dark foliage creeping toward the light. In a moment he was under the window, another moment and he was out of sight. Clara had stolen behind Memmo, he felt her trembling; a crash! a flash of fire! a clattering of broken glass over their heads! The earth shook under their feet.

Memmo caught Clara in his arms, heavy and cold.

"Clara! Clara! Are you hurt!"

He laid her softly on the ground, struck a match and looked with terror in her face.

No trace of wound! Only that deadly pallor.

She opened her eyes, "They have missed you?" she gasped and fainted once more.

She recovered under the caresses of her lover and rose to her feet breaking into uncontrollable sobs of relief.

The red glass door opened softly and Clara saw Daniele approaching.

"For my sake, dearest! Fly; do not stay to meet him!"

"You want me to leave you?"

"He won't hurt me dear. He is fond of me in his way. Spare yourself this meeting, I implore

you." She urged him, entreated him with her eyes, yet Memmo hesitated.

"Clara," said Daniele coolly, "you had better come in, your absence might be noticed."

He affected not to see Memmo, but came nearer to Clara, taking her hand and insisting.

"Come, this is not your place in this moment."

Clara turned to Memmo. "Yes, cara, you had better go indoors now, lest your absence be commented. Go, Dearest."

Daniele's and Memmo's looks met. Hatred blazed from Daniele's eyes, his wolfish smile curled his lips, Memmo's impassable glance answered the challenge. Nor did he move until he saw them walk up to the red door and disappear behind it, and even then he lingered unable to leave the place.

He listened to the confusion which the servants were making outside; he saw the flaring torches rushing to and fro, and presently he caught the regular tramp of the police. Then he started to leave and groped his way to the rear door by which he had entered. It was shut and barred; retracing his steps to the central crossing he soon discovered the place where the glass panes had burst, leaving a sufficient opening for him to get out. He cut his hand on a fragment of glass sticking out of the shattered frame, but managed to leap safely out on a thick bush unhurt.

He was picking himself up, when a man jumped out of the shadow of a bush and ran toward him, firing a pistol. At this signal several men stepped

from behind other bushes and ran toward Memmo. "Better make no fuss, man, you're caught," said a policeman, slipping handcuffs round his wrists.

CHAPTER XV

NEITHER Daniele nor Clara spoke until they entered the dining room and contemplated the havoc caused by the explosion.

From the central lampada, twisted and deformed, all its glass fittings broken, a long flame flickered on a ghastly scene; the cloth, slipping off the table, had dragged down dishes, glasses and decanters, odors of spilled wine and tobacco smoke hung heavily.

Clara moved toward the hall door, but Daniele stopped her.

"You had better come into the billiard room first."

As he opened the door, the air was heavy with the odor of phenic acid. Clara started at the spectacle. Someone made way for her and she advanced. There, stretched upon the table, she saw D'Abbia, partly undressed and wrapped in white bandages.

She noted the greyness of his cheek, his helpless arm hanging by his side, and she shivered. Had death so promptly answered her heart's unspoken wish?

"No, Clara!—he is only wounded."

Dr. Calmi, who was fixing a bandage round Augusto's leg, did not turn round, but called out:

"The Signora should have been spared this sight. I wonder at you, Daniele. Yet since she has come, let her stay."

Calmi was feeling the pulse of the wounded man and watching the return of life to his face.

"He is coming round. The nervous shock and loss of blood brought on this fainting. He has two wounds; the injury to the leg is not very severe and the head has been knocked a bit but not broken. Giovanni, a drop of brandy."

Augusto rallied as the liquor was forced between his lips.

"Pillows," ordered the doctor, "plenty of pillows. There, under his elbow, behind his back. So, that will do."

Then the doctor stepped back to allow Clara to approach. Augusto flushed at the sight of his wife, his red-brimmed and heavy eyes glanced maliciously toward her.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Clara.

"Nothing, cara. Bear your disappointment—sorry I can not keep my promise just now."

"Keep quiet, will you!" interrupted Calmi, "We must put you to bed."

"I order you, Signora, to the rest of your room, where I will have the honor of seeing you later and making my report." He laid his hand on Clara's arm and gently urged her toward the door.

As Clara mounted the grand staircase the billiard room door opened and Daniele's words rang out:

"Attention! All of you! A reward of ten thousand lire will be paid for information about the man who exploded the bomb, or his accomplices."

Clara knew that the hatred in Daniele's voice was directed against Memmo; trembling she clutched at her heart, and fled toward the darkness, the solitude of the upper floor.

The silence and a cooling breeze in her room like caressing, soothing fingers on her brow, calmed the throbbing and she trembled no more. The sights of terror and devastation, the irony of D'Abbia's wicked words, even the hatred in Daniele's heart were forgotten.

Memmo filled her soul! Every tone of his voice, every glance of his eyes, every word, the ecstasy of his kiss still thrilled her!

Calmi's voice at the door startled her. He called out to a servant to come and light the gas. Calmi's plump figure and cheerful face were saved from vulgarity by the intellectual fire in his eyes, by his resolute and kind expression. Just now his look had a gravity, a tenderness, which roused in Clara a responsive friendliness.

"The police inspector thinks the strikers were trying to frighten the manager of the Mills, the servants think that it was a trick of the police, a pretext for a general arrest of dangerous characters and suspected individuals. Strangely, both Augusto and Daniele claim the honor of having been personally aimed at."

"What has Daniele to do with this affair?"

"He was standing almost as close to the window as Augusto was. By good luck he was not injured by the fragments of glass and rolling stones that fell

around him. He is actively pushing the search by promises of reward. A dozen persons have already been arrested.

"Does it take so many to explode a bomb?"

"Certainly not, but our policemen are never re-proved for making a sweep of dangerous men, as it keeps criminals out of the way for awhile. Of course they know that the real culprit was probably out of reach even before the explosion; yet these poor wretches will be kept in prison for months—while a giudice d'istruzione pretends to make an inquiry after which the magistrates will either order the trial or pronounce the release. The poor devil who has been thus arbitrarily arrested will lose his character and his former employment, his health is probably impaired, his spirit embittered."

The more Calmi looked at the girlish face, the greater his pity and the more grave his voice.

"You have never honored me with your confidence," he said abruptly, "yet there are situations which cannot escape the notice of the family doctor, especially when he enjoys the privilege of being sometimes your guest, and then there are circumstances when he realizes that it is his duty to interfere."

Clara remained silent.

"You probably know very little about your husband's ruined constitution, and nothing about the consequences that may arise from even the wounds he has received to-night!"

"You told me they were very slight."

"So they are. Another man would be up and about in a few days—but—Augusto D'Abbia has led—a very fast life—he may possibly recover, but—complications are likely to intervene. I fear, Contessa, your husband is threatened with a severe and lingering illness."

Doctor Calmi watched every expression on Clara's face.

"Do not waste pity on the man! The fact of his having married you when he was—Thank God! You do not understand me!" He patted her hand as he might have done a child's: "Listen to me, Signorina, have you no relative, no friend, to take care of you and your affairs? No one but Dan Sparnieri? Excuse me, dear child. I am an old man, I have a daughter just as pure and guileless as you are—I would rest quieter in my mind if I knew someone was watching over you."

Clara raised to the kind doctor's face those large grave eyes, then slowly answered:

"Someone is watching over me. I shall leave this house altogether in a few days."

"Leave this house!" gasped the doctor.

"Yes. You cannot disapprove of me?"

"Perbacco! But child, how? I cannot see——"

"I have Augusto's promise that we will be divorced abroad. He will openly desert me. O, Doctor; O, Doctor, do your best for him—for my sake—let him be speedily well!"

"With all my heart! His case becomes interesting, if that is the prospect.

"I guess what arguments have decided Augusto to relinquish his prey. I like you the better for it and I feel greatly relieved. Give up everything even to your last penny, and get out of this hell. Meanwhile trust me to give you all the assistance in my power. God knows it would be no grief to anyone if he died, but since we are not allowed to promote such happy results, we shall get the best specialists to cure him; I will be here as often as needful to see that everything is done to hasten his recovery or to retard the progress of his disease."

"How kind of you, Doctor."

"Diavola! It is my duty. Go to bed now; I will bring you the necessary reports. Buona notte!"

Lanza and Calmi would protect her, and Memmo would not fret when he realized the necessity of submitting to circumstances.

When morning came a gloomy silence had fallen over the villa; as the days went by it became more stifling and dark. By Clara's desires no visitors were admitted; by Daniele's orders the mills were closed until their manager had recovered.

What life remained within the Villa was now centred in the darkened room whence the doctors came and went, where the servants entered on tip-toe, where orders were issued in whispers.

Daniele assumed direction of affairs under the guise of carrying out Augusto's orders, and Clara presided at the regular meals, listened politely to such information as he gave of Augusto's progress—

always in contradiction to Calmi's reports. She could do no more.

Her repulsion for Daniele had acquired a strength and a definite character. His presence was a reminder of her mother's shame and of his hatred for Memmo.

She knew his every word was a lie, yet she must keep her bargain with Augusto, and her promise to Memmo.

She was a stranger in this house which had never been a home. Daniele soon made the house like a prison, whence the larger number of servants fled. Yet Clara never interfered, not even when her personal servants were supplanted by those who had gained favor by fawning on the new master, or by acting as his spies.

CHAPTER XVI

SIGNORA BELTRANI was agitated and she was puzzled. Even a blind man could see he was desperately in love with Renza; why then did he not "spill wine or water out of this cask?" Why did he not "sift this bushel of corn" and get the "yea that binds or the nay that frees me"?

That any man should have felt bashful and have hesitated to propose to such a highly bred and beautiful signorina was only natural; but Giovanni Arivabene! The signorotto of San Gemignano! Who belonged to an ancient family and owned the best acres of land, the largest vineyards! Who lived in a farmhouse that had once been a Medicean castle, that he should prove so timid, was extraordinary. Ehi! Perbacco, young men in my time did not expect more encouragement!

Signora contemplated some simple artifices that would hasten an explanation between the young people. Not, certainly, to entrap her guest, but merely because she liked clear situations and hated the idea that her daughter be suspected of angling for this big fish. Surely opportunities for plain speaking had not been wanting; their manner of living was favorable to intimacy. In the absence of out of door amusements the young people spent

most of their time together in the house, and Signora made many excuses for indulging in comfortable naps after meals, keeping out of the way when Nanni sat by Renza's embroidery frame or when the young couple lingered round the table.

The sullen gloom of the city lent to their home-life an intimacy which it would not have assumed in a quieter period. There was no going about now, in a city infested by soldiers; no occasion for loitering in the Piazza since the band did not play, the caf  s were closed and when every unfamiliar face might be that of a spy.

Thus the sweet evening hours, the twilight moments were spent in the parlor or on the balcony; Signora watching Nanni's bashfulness, and noting Renza's pretty ways. All this was delightfully lover-like but Signora would prefer knowing exactly "in how many feet deep of water she was fishing."

Why, at least, had he not dropped a hint to her?

Nanni had his reason for not adopting this usual course. In those few days he had learned much of Renza's character. He knew that he must win the consent of this proud and independent girl. Unlike other girls she would never blindly accept her mother's choice. Yet every day he felt more nervous, fearing to risk a refusal that would banish him from this paradise.

Renza was abstracted. Even when she smiled on him, spoke to him, Nanni knew Renza had thoughts which she did not share with him. If her affections

were already engaged it would probably be some great personage. Perbacco! If a Prince of the royal family had been paying her attention, she might be justified in looking down on a fellow in that freezing manner! But no one was in sight, and he knew Renza incapable of a secret intrigue.

When Nanni was not sitting by Renza's embroidery frame he was running on her errands. He went several times to the Villa D'Abbia; heard how, on the night when the bomb exploded and Rosita had been taken in by her mother, the child had contracted a low fever, infectious but not alarming, and that she was nursed at the lodge by a foreign doctor. To Signora's surprise and disgust, Nanni also reported that Vigo had enlisted in the police.

"God knows I never had a high opinion of the man, but that beats me! I would rather starve than accept that sort of employment."

"Hunger is a stringent persuader, Sora Adele. For my part, I have several friends among the carabinieri," said Nanni.

"They are different! I only object to the agents who are habitually recruited out of the released thieves and are expected to play the part of spies. If they were brave they would rob—honestly, rather than betray others to rob, and then catch them and earn a reward."

"You must have nasty people to do nasty business," said Renza.

"Do you call it nasty business to maintain order and defend us against the thieves and disturbers of

public peace? The interference of politicanti provoked the interference of authority. This legal violence is a reaction after the violence of the mob." Nanni came closer to Renza's chair and pursued his argument. "It is an old precept, 'The world goes of itself.' "

" 'Because the earth is round it rolls of itself,' " corrected Signora. "The best thing is to let well enough alone, all will come right in good time. 'Run my horse, the oats are growing,' " said signora. "People are tired of waiting with empty stomachs, and then they turn wrong, or scamper away to 'Merica, leaving their wives, sweethearts—and children."

"Emigration is not such a bad thing for our poor people," said Nanni. "No! I'm not unfeeling, nor unpatriotic. In our part of the country many of the peasants have left for foreign nations to see them, and judge us by them. Now what do you think has been happening in these last years? Some of these emigrants are doing well in America; others have come home, with money, and now they enjoy their independence in quiet little cottages, and they till a patch of land; San Gemignano is proud of them now."

"But those who have forgotten their families! Those who are lost!"

"No man, who is really worth his salt, ever gets lost," pronounced Nanni. "They are building, far away, in the New Continent, a greater Italy for our grandchildren. A greater Italy that will inherit our

advanced civilization and be unshackled by our obsolete institutions."

"Then," insinuated Signora, "up there in 'Merica there is no trifling with matrimonial duties. It's 'eat this soup or jump out of this window.' When a man has made love to a girl he has to marry her!"

"All these things would be taught at home," insisted Renza, "if only the men belonging to the favored class would give the benefit of their education to the improvement of the uneducated."

"I confess I have little faith in the assistance which the educated class is always promising to give to the others. In San Gemignano some socialists have been preaching their gospel and now there are quarrels about politics as there never were before."

"San Gemignano was seldom free from family quarrels in my time," said Signora. "They lasted for generations."

"For goodness' sake do not allow your town bred prejudice to influence you against country manners. Believe me, there is more genuine peace and happiness in our hills than you can ever find in your towns. My dearest wish is to have you amongst our country folk and to make you appreciate our country pleasures!" Nanni's face glowed with eagerness. "I would so like you to be there in harvest time, or when the grapes are gathered! I would like to wander with you in the fields and lead you up those wooded hills, across the chestnut groves, and higher still, amidst the firs and the ferns."

Signora sighed as she recalled those memories of

her girlhood, but the sigh ended in a smile, as she conjured up the possibilities of the future.

Nanni blushed and his eyes flashed with the prospect he had evoked, and Renza, meeting his glance, blushed too. Then with reproach of conscience she bowed her head over her work and stitched away in penitence and industry.

Renza felt horribly wicked. How could she, in Memmo's absence, find amusement in Nanni's pretty speeches? How could she tolerate his attentions? Worse still, she was thrilled by his undisguised admiration. Could she trifle with the affection of one man while loving another? To the simple-minded people with whom she had always associated a girl who loves, even in hopeless infatuation, is the victim of fatality, an object of pity, not of blame. Love is the master of all souls, every allowance is granted, every compassion lavished on those who suffer, or sin, for love. But the flirt who encourages one man while the other is away, is a monster, something to be shunned and despised.

As she bent her burning face over her embroidery, she repeated to herself that she was not in love with Nanni; that she liked to look at him, because she liked to look at beautiful things. If her heart throbbed when he was near, if her cheek felt hot when she met his gaze, it was merely shyness; she would outgrow these foolish ways when they were better acquainted.

Her conscience pricked her with the recollection of the greater attention she now paid to her morn-

ing toilet, of the care with which she dressed her hair, and she pleaded for herself that one must not be a discredit to one's guests, and that she would have done as much for any other visitor.

Nanni walked about the room, which seemed so narrow for his big limbs, and so small for his ringing voice.

"Now, since your mind is not made up, why should we not go for a walk in the country. I am sure you both want a breath of fresh air."

Signora turned instinctively toward Renza.

"The Signorina, too, wants a little open air exercise. She is looking pale and tired."

"No, she is not," Signora reassuringly told herself. "But you are welcome to concern yourself about her looks."

In fact, Renza was just then blushing as red as a rose.

"Of course," stammered Signora, "I would like to take a holiday, but—"

Renza stared at her mother, astonished.

"Time enough if we start in half an hour," exclaimed Nanni, "Only I must go out first on a little business and then let me help you to make ready. Signorina, trust me with your embroidery."

Nanni soon returned panting and jubilant. The embroidery frame was wrapped up, the shutters closed against sun and dust, the kitchen fire covered with ashes, and before Renza quite realized that she was consenting, she was prepared for the trip. She put on the pretty light grey gown that suited her well

and about her head the dainty amber crepe santuzza which set off her rosy cheeks. The "Uliveta", the olive grove that spreads its grey foliage from the coast of Antignano up to the sanctuary of Montenero, was the place Nanni had selected.

A charming, quiet and shaded place it was on this sunny May afternoon. The tremulous leaves showed their lighter or their darker face alternately in waves of soft color. A shower of golden arrows slanted across the branches, while in the distance, the light under the foliage became a sheen of silver gauze.

"Let us find seats here on these twisted trunks," said Nanni, "and have a bit of merenda."

Looking very mysterious, Nanni whistled shrilly and out of the shadow came a boy carrying a heavy basket which Nanni opened. Here was a stuffed fowl, a pasticcio with a crisp crust, sweets and strawberries! Here was a fiasco of sparkling old wine, and here was a tiny machine for preparing coffee! Happy Renza did not speak her thanks, but her mother was lavish with surprise and gratitude. She shook her finger at smiling Nanni and said,

"So this was the 'business' which took you out of the house!"

"Come here, Signora, this stump will do for a seat. I will make it softer for you with my overcoat."

Signora beamed, and Renza settled at her feet on the grass.

The impromptu merenda was duly appreciated, the old wine lent a rosier hue to Renza's cheeks, an

additional lustre to Nanni's eyes, and to Signora's bright expectations for the future.

"If I could but persuade you to come to the country," insisted Nanni. "You would like our sweet summer evenings in the village Piazza, where a pair of stornellatori are never wanting to cheer the company."

"I remember the boys of my time singing stornelli in competitions. Do they still tease the village girls with dispetti? Do they still give serenades under the windows of the prettiest?"

"Of course they do, Mother dear. Do you suppose there are no more young people in San Gemignano because you have left it? I am sure the Signor Arrivabene is the village beau, il gallo della checca."

"Yes, I do like to enjoy myself."

"What do you mean by enjoying yourself?"

"Gazing on beautiful things. Beauty makes me happy because it stirs within me that which is best."

Renza blushed at Nanni's regard. She turned her head aside and plucked at green blades of grass; she pressed her face against her mother's skirts, pretending to be sleepy. There as she lay with her rosy cheek under the cluster of her hair, watched by the ardent gaze of a lover and the fond looks of her mother, there as she lay, Renza endured an agony of remorse, a torment of self condemnation.

While her mother, passing from sleepy vigil to comfortable naps, was dreaming of chubby grandchildren; of brooding hens pecking at her lap; of a fair young wife ruling over a plentiful farm; while

village is full of fishermen; there will certainly be a boat."

They walked through the village of Antignano, swarming with the fishermen returning from the sea, and the workmen coming from the city. It was a cheerful crowd, filled with children, while the women standing in the doorways called them in to supper. Dark-haired, with cheeks browned by sea wind and sun, the women had the stately grace, the full form and delicacy of feature that belongs to the pure Tuscan type.

Renza, as she looked at those home pictures, thought over Nanni's sayings, and she too believed in the goodness of life and of bountiful nature.

As they passed through the Central Piazza, Nanni's head was raised, his eyes shone, as he noted the whispered comments, the glances of admiration for his companion and envy for his own good luck. To her shame, Renza too felt elated as she read in the looks of the women their appreciation of Nanni's fine appearance.

A row boat? There were several ready at hand for the signore. This would do. Signora Beltrani wished it larger, and manned by a more reliable crew than this merry sailor boy, who gladly accepted Nanni's bargain.

At last they were seated and the sailor boy seized his oars.

"Please, Signore," he said to Nanni, "sit a little closer to your sposa, so as to make the balance even."

It was Nanni who blushed while Renza turned pale, and Signora coughed.

The oars splashed, the breeze stirred silvery flashes over the seagreen expanse, the gulls whirled over their heads, screaming. Far away, beyond the clouds, the sun hastened downward, its golden rays spreading intimations of the coming sunset. As if panting for the god-like embrace, the waters shone and heaved in expectant desire.

Infinite joy, a vague delight, floated over sea and in air. Nanni's heart filled with joy. All was too passing sweet, too beautiful. The rays of the setting sun spread a halo round Renza's head.

"You are like a Madonna," he breathed softly.

She turned away her burning face and her hand caressed the flowing water.

"You are like a Madonna," he whispered. "Have you no pity for your worshipper?"

She turned her head away, but she felt the imploring glance all over her, and slowly, unconsciously, her lips smiled; slowly, reluctantly, turned toward him, and for one moment their souls spoke in their eyes, and her panting heart revealed its secret to herself and to Nanni.

But silence is distressingly eloquent; Renza tried to break it.

"Mother likes stornelli, why do you not sing her some?"

"I have not my mandoline."

"A mandoline," interrupted the sailor boy.

"What for? We never use it here for the stornelli."

We can sing behi, all of us. I bet you anything you like, that I'll accompany any tune you can sing."

"Even the Florentine stornelli?"

"When I tell you everything—now if I spoil your performance call me—a cabbage."

He laughed at his own wit and Signora laughed at some funny association of ideas. But Nanni had a reputation for his singing, and he was eager to charm one of his listeners. A bad accompaniment would mar his performance. Anxiously, in an undertone, he tried the popular song, listening to the boy's behi, given in a mellow, well-tuned voice.

The rippling waves, the splash of oars, marked the cadence of the melody which flowed sweetly. At first Nanni repeated the popular stornelli, then drifted, like every stornellatore, into rearranging the words, and improvising them altogether. Thus he called on every flower to bear witness of his love.

"Fiora di Pepe

Io giro intorno a voi, come fan l'ape,

Come fan l'ape, ai fiori della siepe."

He sang with the approximating riming and exact rhythm required. Then he called on the fiore di gniestra, which led up to mentioning the finestra, where he was sitting by the side of the prettiest girl on earth. Suddenly, remembering that Renza was embroidering a bunch of mignonette, he struck off an invocation of the fior d'amorino, and, with a quiver of emotion he risked the entreaty for a bacino. But noting the cloud on Renza's face he shifted his mode and struck, in a brisker strain, a series of dispetti

pointed at Signora Beltrani, who laughed loudly, on being thus made fun of.

"I am sure you can sing things out of an opera," said the appreciative sailor.

"Do you know Amico Fritz, boy?"

"Of course I do! What Livornese does not know every note of his world-famous fellow citizen!"

Then Nanni intuned the grand air Tutto Face. His voice, strong and clear, harmonious with the grandeur of his surroundings, blended with the musical ripple of the waters, expanded over the quiescent clouds, telling to all sympathizing nature the charm of spring time, the ecstasy of love's awakening, amidst the stirring of the year's first blossoms. Then Nanni made a sign to his accompanist, and with a clever passage they glided into the finale Amore, Bella Luce del Cor and the two voices swelled into the solemn unison that Mascagni has borrowed from ancient masters; and in the sweeping melody that expands and soars, like the glorification of the divine passion; they startled a responsive echo from the blazing sea, the glorious clouds.

The soul of silent things thrilled to answer these young voices singing that love is the light of every heart, the everlasting flame which Nature holds within her breast, Amore bella luce della core.

A sweeter treble, a clearer note now joined; it blended with the men's graver voices, it soared higher as if lifting the hidden sense of the harmonious hymn, further above, higher up, into the regions of greater purity. Renza was seduced by the en-

chantment of the moment! Forgetting fears and misgivings, doubts and remorse, she joined in the invocation to Love; Love the sparkle, Love the unquenchable light, Love the eternal Flame!

Even as the last long drawn note died away, the sun dipped behind the sea. Only a line of darker red remained on the water, and a veil of violet mist arose and wrapped in its manifold hues the fantastic pageantry of sunset.

"Let us wait a moment; there's the afterglow," said the sailor, lifting his oars expectantly.

Silent, they watched the spot where the sun had sunk beyond the green sea.

"Here it comes!" whispered the boy.

A first shaft of red light darted out of the waters, it shot across the sky, then expanded and melted into a rosy hue. Then another, and another, bright sparks, winged arrows on the tips of the clouds, above the glistening water. They melted and blended and the rosy hue filled the concave sky with fiery splendor, shone on the sea, with reverberated glory.

The trees on the Passeggiata stood out like fantastic apparitions, the houses beyond were glorified in the transient magnificence, the ships, anchored in the harbor, were illuminated as for a feast, the beacon light was dimmed, outshone by the redder glow, that sparkling and victorious beat at every window pane, alighted on every projecting gable.

"How grand! How lovely!" whispered Renza softly.

Nanni was dumb with the fullness of his sensations.

The red light lingered an instant, then gradually, gently it blended with the soft hues and indistinct outlines of the grey twilight.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE was no light on the stairs when Nanni helped Signora Beltrani to grope her way up and to find the door, while Renza walked behind, lingering over the day's sweet remembrance, cherishing its charm.

She stopped in front of the window, on the mid-way landing, and peered into the garden below. She realized that there was some subtle change in her, that she was different from her old self, that even resentments served a part of some vague and shadowy past. The passivity, the hopeless fatalism that had tormented her had vanished and there only remained this sweet nameless sensation of happiness, this rapture of every sense, this elation of soul. She did not attempt to give it a name, but it was the birth into a new life, an entering into the Kingdom of Love. Life was beautiful, the world smiled upon her, holding in its outstretched hands a plenitude of joy. With eyes that had only now learned to see, with a heart that only now had learned to rejoice she gazed through the frame of masonry and foliage upon this similar landscape which with an intoxicating sense of comprehension she perceived was gilded and adorned with a new glory, and had become a poem and a song.

A hand on her shoulder, a husky voice calling her by name, startled her dreams, and she turned with a smothered cry.

"Hush for God's sake, it's Vigo! You are not such a fool as to mistrust me because I wear this policeman masquerade? You don't doubt my devotion to Memmo?"

"Are you sent by Memmo?"

"Sent by Memmo? He is in prison, awaiting trial by the Florentine Court Martial. Now don't faint! Don't call for help! Por Dio! There is something for you to do and do quickly—and secretly. Listen! Renza! Secretly. Don't let your mother interfere; act promptly if you would not be responsible for Memmo's death and other men's ruin."

"What can I do?" gasped Renza.

"You must prepare for the visita domiciliare in Memmo's rooms, and destroy all compromising papers. Anticipate the police. Let them find nothing to aggravate his position and implicate others—books—letters—documents of any sort. Malignity and ignorance will twist everything into evidence against him."

"Renza dear, why are you not coming in?" Signora Beltrani's voice called.

Vigo's face came so close to Renza that his phosphorescent eyes shone in the dark, she could feel his hot breath on her cheek.

"Lose not a moment Renza. Above all, secretly."

"But what—what is the charge?"

"The principal charge will be—shall be—disproved, sooner or later. But they also want to establish a connection between the riots here and those in Milan. It is a trap set by the police."

Again Signora's voice was heard, "Renza, who is speaking to you? Come up, dear."

"Sangue di Cristol!" growled Vigo under his breath as he released Renza's arm and vanished. She would have recalled him, she would have asked further instructions; but he had gone. She groped her way upstairs to meet her mother's inquiries with a confused account of a headache and need of rest. Renza lay in the large bed which she shared with her mother, her anxiety growing every moment, as she tried to counterfeit sleep and deceive her mother.

At last a deep breathing, reassured her.

What had Memmo done? What were the police about to do? How could she save him? That Memmo might have been arrested with the other leaders of his party was conceivable, but she had not dreamed that a separate charge could be brought against him. She reproached herself for having been selfish and stupid. Why had she taken for granted that Memmo had been all this time attending a Congresso? She ought to have wondered at his silence. Had she not been utterly absorbed in her own affairs and now perhaps he would die.

The clock in the parlor struck one, so that Renza could calculate on several quiet hours before the neighborhood began to stir.

Bare-footed, in lowcut chemise, lifting a petticoat from a chair, a candle stick and matches from the night table, Renza stole from the room. She crossed the parlor and groped her way to Memmo's door and then she struck a match.

A table in the centre was littered with papers and books, scientific writings, and contained no handwriting. Private papers must be somewhere. She tried the chest of drawers; locked!

Then Renza remembered her mother's keys, one of them might turn this lock. Then she noticed a little bronze statuette from whose lifted arm a bunch of keys dangled. As she seized them the statuette fell with a crash. Renza's heart stood still, expecting to hear her mother's voice, but there was no sound.

The first key she tried in the lock turned easily and she pulled out the drawer. It was filled with costly and elegant things; shirt studs and pins and two framed, faded photographs. The first one was Memmo's mother, as the likeness clearly indicated. The other was an ungainly girl, and Renza supposed it to be Memmo's sister. Certainly she never thought of Contessa D'Abbia.

A noise behind startled her. Slowly the door opened and Renza, shuddered at the outline of a man and the glistening barrel of a pistol. She stared thunderstruck as Nanni advanced.

But a few hours ago he had retired to rest, cherishing the image of this girl, in all the humility of a devoted lover. Now this idol he had worshipped

was discovered, half naked, in the dead of night, in another man's bedroom!

His fingers tightened round the pistol; his eye searched the obscurity of the room. No one was here but Renza.

Renza in her scanty garments! Renza standing in front of an open drawer, yet Renza so composed and dignified that she checked the first outburst of the jealous storm.

"Signore Arrivabene!" she whispered, "do not make any noise. Shut that door cautiously, please. Mother must not hear us."

Nanni noiselessly shut the door, then once more faced the sight of her unveiled beauty, the evidence of her misbehavior, and he sneered.

"Afraid of your mother knowing? You would keep your nightly expeditions a secret? Why should I not tell?"

"You a spy?" She considered the matter gravely for awhile, then she added. "You heard a noise and that made you come in, pistol in hand, to defend us?"

"I could not expect——"

"Of course. How could you? But since you have come you are going to help me."

"Indeed."

Even while Nanni uttered this word his tortured soul was conscious that something in Renza belied the damning evidence. His jealousy was not softened, but his respect was compelled.

"You will know more about these things than I do. You can help Memmo and his friends."

"Memmo and his friends being very dear to you."

"Memmo and his cause being well worth any man's or woman's devotion," she said, looking into his face proudly. "But this is not the moment to discuss. But a few hours ago I heard that while we believed Memmo to be in Florence, he has been in prison all this time. I have been warned that the police will make a visita domiciliare in his room, and I am here to remove all compromising papers. The aim of the inquiry is to establish a connection between the riots here and the movements in Milan so as to involve all the leaders in a charge of conspiracy."

"You expect me to assist you in deceiving the police?"

"I want you to assist me in preventing a great injustice." She handed him the bunch of keys. "Will you try the bureau while I examine these drawers?"

Nanni hesitated. Would he allow this girl to fool him? This mysterious affair might become a dangerous enterprise. With the idea of peril his hesitation ended. If Renza was implicated, if she was in danger—he must protect her.

He looked at her beauty, with the flickering light of the candle glittering on her arms and throat, piercing the gossamer tissue of her gown. There she stood, unconscious of his regard, modestly accomplishing her task.

"How devotedly she loved him!" thought Nanni, and visions of murder surged through him.

"Have you found anything?" asked Renza.

Nanni started, trembled lest she might read his thoughts.

"I don't—I don't know the key," he stammered.

"Nor do I. Just try them."

There was comfort in this ignorance. The bureau, on being opened, displayed many shelves and tiny drawers and boxes. No word was exchanged as papers were examined, books shaken and set down.

"Have you examined the pockets of the jacket and overcoat hanging over there?" suggested Nanni. "If the man received a warning at the last moment—or a summons, he may have thrust it into his pocket."

Renza searched several pockets.

"Here are some letters," she said, laying them on the writing desk.

Nanni, trembling at her nearness, spread the papers on the desk and turned them over carefully.

"This is enough to send several score of men to the gallows. This looks like a list of conspirators. Here are the names of the leaders that are being tried in Milan, and here, in front of each name, is a figure or a conventional sign. Certainly this bit of paper might decide the issue of a political trial."

He looked into Renza's face and a cruel expression stole over his own.

"I guess your hero might be sent to the wall or

to the reclusion for life if we showed this half sheet of paper."

Renza clasped her hands, terrified by the vision. She was so close that Nanni could feel the warmth of her body.

"Oh! This is quite a different thing!" he picked up a little note scrawled on scented and emblazoned paper.

"It is the Contessa D'Abbia's crest and her monogram," said Renza.

"My own Memmo. Come here to-night by nine o'clock—Perbacco! The date? May first! This is of the greatest importance! It is an alibi!"

"What do you mean?"

"What do I mean? Everything! If he was at the villa to meet his sweetheart, he was not there to throw a bomb!"

Renza reeled. Nanni was silent. When he spoke his voice sounded strange.

"You hold within your hands the fate of the man—if—he has wronged you—by showing this list—by merely leaving it here for the policemen to find you can secure your revenge. But this other paper, this note saves him—if you show it."

"Why do you ask? I only wish to save him."

"I know! I know!" Nanni groaned. "You love him so dearly that even his treason could not shake your devotion."

He struggled against his jealousy, then seized Renza's wrists.

"How do you love him! No, you shall not go.

Ah! You wanted me to save that faithless lover of yours! You never cared what torment you inflicted on me! You thought only of him! I was only a stupid instrument to be used, then spurned!" He savagely tightened his grasp. "You are mistaken, Signorina, I am a man!"

"Nanni, what do you mean?"

The humbleness of her accent added fuel to Nanni's wrath.

"You have used me cruelly! Why did you let me believe you cared for me. Did you plan to use me as a tool from the first? You fear only for him! I hate him, I hate him! I will not give you up to any man! I would rather kill you—as I will kill him!"

He thrust her away from him. He covered his face with his hands. His shoulders heaved under the violence of his sobs, he seemed ready to fall. Timidly, Renza walked up to him and gently laid her hand on his arm.

"You wrong me, Nanni, indeed you do. I never——"

He lifted his face and stared at her distractedly, while tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Sangue di Cristo! Must a man be tortured in this way? Can you not see, child, that you are goading me to madness? Your beauty is maddening, but your infatuation for this traitor is worse! Why? Why must I know all at once how surpassingly fair you are, how surpassingly devoted you can be? Renza, beware! A saint might commit a crime

under such provocation! O, Cristo di Dio! Keep thy holy hands over my head! I feel ripe for any crime!"

"Nanni, believe me! I never—I do not love him——"

"Dio Signore! How you do love him! For his sake you renounce him! For his sake you would utter a vile lie! Madonna di Dio, preserve me from this horrible temptation!"

He shook Renza's hand from his arm, walked to the desk and picked out the list from the papers that were lying upon it. His eyes glared at the document; then he turned to Renza and sneered,

"Here it is! The half sheet of paper! In my possession! Not you! Not you, but I can dispose of this man's life!"

And rushed from the room.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Renza awoke late, the high sun filtered through the blinds and dazzled her. Her head ached, her temples throbbed. Willingly would she have slept. But with awakening consciousness came a confusion of delightful and distressing recollections.

Nanni's awful threats still rang in her ears, but then also Nanni's frenzied expression of love filled her with joy.

Jealousy had maddened him; but he would listen to her confession and relent. That Nanni should so passionately love her as to meditate a crime was not alarming if only she had time to explain. But what if on the first mad impulse, he had already executed his threat?

She remembered an old-fashioned picture of *Ciro Menotti* handcuffed and awaiting the deadly shot of the soldiers fronting him. *Menotti's* face was transformed into *Memmo's* staring at her reproachfully!

She started from her bed. She opened the window, plunged her face in cold water and hurried her dressing.

At whatever cost of humiliation she must persuade Nanni to give her back that paper. Because if Nanni were unworthy she must banish him from her heart forever. And that would kill her.

She threw open her door and entered the parlor, and heard voices in Memmo's room.

O God! This was the *visita domiciliare*!

She crept up to the door. Through the chink she could see Nanni's back; so straight and square. He spoke harshly.

"Sangue di Cristo! Signore Delegato! Are you going to stop here all day?"

"As long as it is required for the accomplishment of my duty, Mister What's-your-name," croaked the nasal Neapolitan. "I would never think of keeping you and the Signora in the room."

"I will stay and you know why!"

"Just as it pleases your *Eccellenza*" obsequiously, toward the end of the room.

"Have you examined all the drawers? And the bed? Cut open the mattress? We have to deal with a sly game, and evidently he had been warned. They are all in it——"

"All in it! What do you dare insinuate! You—you policeman!"

Renza recognized her mother's scorn for the *sbirro* in the word "policeman."

"Warned! Do you take me, me, a God-fearing widow, for one of your customers?"

"Do you find anything?" drawled the Neapolitan.

"Niente, *Voscienza*!" answered a hoarse Sicilian.

"Why then do you make such a horrid mess of those shirts? I ironed them myself and put them in with my own hands. Why crease and soil them in this way?"

"Do not worry Sora Adele," Nanni's voice softened. "Do not worry. Your boarder is not likely to want his shirts for some time."

"Not for some time!" Renza's heart sank. Could Nanni have committed the nameless crime?

No! It had not been committed! She would not believe it; Nanni was loyal.

Presently the voice from the end of the room was heard again in hoarse Sicilian drawl:

"Please, Voscienza, we have turned over everything."

"Then," pompously retorted the Neapolitan, "if that is the case, I suppose we can go. Having accomplished in due form the duty entrusted to us, we will take our leave from the Signora Beltrani, and from this gentleman whose name I have not the pleasure to know."

"My name is Giovanni Arrivabene, from San Gemignano, and I do not care to keep it back, even from you. But you are not going to depart in this way, Signore Delegato. There is something you will do first."

Renza shivered; she knew what was coming; she would stop Nanni's fatal words! O God, that he should be so false to his own generous, noble nature! She fell down on her knees by the door.

"Order your clerk to write down the declaration I will dictate."

Renza tried to rise; strove to call out.

"What do you want to declare?" asked the Neapolitan.

"Write down a statement, clear and precise," commanded Nanni, "that you have accurately searched this room."

"What are you meddling about? When I get to the police station, I will make my report to my superiors, and they will write a *processo verbale* in due form."

"None of those tricks, *Signore Delegato*. You do not go out of this house until I have seen the *processo verbale* and signed it. There have been instances, as you know, of compromising papers multiplying after a *visita domiciliare*. I am but a countryman, but my shoes are thicker than my brains. I want to see that things are done fairly."

"*'Carta canta e villan dorme,'*" quoted *Signora* with a laugh. "You have found my match, *Signore Delegato*. This countryman is up to your tricks and he hasn't got any hair on his tongue."

"You offend me, *Signore Arrivabene*, and with me you offend my office. You may rue your impertinence."

"To the devil you, your office, and all the unchained devils that protect you! Can you not see, man, that I'm dangerous? Write down your declaration stating that you have found absolutely nothing besides the books and reviews of science here. Be quick now and get out of the way!"

When a few minutes later Nanni ushered the detectives through the parlor, he had, by pushing wide open the door, concealed Renza's inanimate form where she lay against the wall; but *Signora*, follow-

ing, soon discovered her and called him back with clamorous vociferation.

Nanni lifted the inanimate girl in his arms and laid her carefully on the divan, while Signora bathed Renza's brow and the palms of her hands with vinegar, and held to her nostrils a bottle of aqua antisterica.

"O Madonna Benedetta! How they have frightened her! What a fool I was to let her come out of her room and meet those rascals!"

"I am all right, Mother, don't worry."

"They are gone, my own treasure! They are gone. They haven't found any bit of paper whatever, and thanks to Nanni, they were forced to behave properly. O Nanni! You have been to me like a son! I wonder what those brutes might have done—or said, if they had found us alone and helpless!"

"Nonsense, Sora Adele, though of course I am glad if I have been a comfort—to you."

He spoke with formal politeness and shunned Renza's gaze.

"With your leave now, Sora Adele, I must be going——"

"Not before you have had your breakfast. I am sure you both need some food after all this trouble. Renza, my darling, do not move before you have had a cordiale. Lie quiet, cara, while I prepare one for you and another for Nanni."

Left alone with Renza, Nanni walked over to the window and stood there as if the spectacle outside greatly interested him. He was angry with himself.

Why had he allowed Signora to entrap him into this tete-a-tete? Why did his foolish heart rejoice in this opportunity in spite of his reason? He had decided to start by the first convenient train, his things were packed, yet here he lingered, like a fool, and had not yet even given warning to his landlady of his quitting. He might begin now by telling Renza of his intended departure. He turned round brusquely, intending to address a few bitter words to her and then go.

But he saw her lying back very pale, her eyes closed, and his resolution was shaken. Though he steeled his heart against her, telling himself that he would be a fool if he felt pity, he could not help noting the havoc which one night of tears and terror had worked on that beautiful face. And his heart melted. He heard that inner voice which bade him love forever, love without hope, love with all forgetting passion that seeks no reward, expects no thanks.

Renza raised her eyelids and turned toward Nanni a timid glance. He read the sadness, the humility of that appeal to him.

Renza's lips moved, but no sound came. Two heavy tears hung from her long lashes.

"Nanni!" breathed Renza, "Nanni, forgive me!"

He could not resist but bent over her. There was no mistaking her joy.

"I have nothing to forgive! You have done nothing!"

"Yes, I have. I have wronged you in my thoughts. I have feared you might execute your threat."

She did not turn her eyes away from him; she did not avoid the intensity of his looks. She had indeed confessed all her wrong; there was nothing else to conceal in her innocent heart. She awaited her answer.

Nanni was staggered by the sudden light. The revelation that he read in Renza's glance was so exquisitely sweet that it seemed impossible that it could be true.

"Renza! Do you want me to go?"

He bent low over her, his life centered in her eyes. She turned very pale and looked up in alarm.

"Renza! Renza! Do you want me to stay?"

The light in her eyes was his answer.

CHAPTER XIX

THE thought of saving a guileless girl from the pollution of a debauchee, and of abetting a love affair, appealed to Doctor Calmi. Though the girl's consideration for her worthless husband and Calmi's own delicacy had prevented a complete revelation of the facts, through D'Abbia's confession to him as his physician, he knew that Clara was a wife in name only, and his admiration for the nobility and purity which had remained uncontaminated in this depraved atmosphere, was equaled by his loathing of the rascal whom even association with Clara had not redeemed.

It soon became the habit for Doctor Calmi, after his professional call on Augusto, to spend part of every morning in Clara's boudoir, where over a cup of chocolate he lingered in quiet talk after delivering his medical report.

"In conclusion," said Dr. Calmi, laying down his cup, "to-day, the first of July, just two months after the accident, Augusto D'Abbia is able to stand on his wounded leg and though his blood was too thoroughly diseased before he received this wound to hope for a complete recovery, we may hope for a temporary return of strength, but he is utterly obstinate and he will soon be worse than ever. By the way, what is the matter to-day? He seemed pe-

cularly restless, asking twenty times whether Daniele had started in time for the train for Florence and if telegrams had come for him?"

Clara could not tell. Indeed, she never inquired about Daniele's frequent absences.

"Walk down the avenue with me, child, as far as your favorite chalet; you have been leading a secluded life and a little open air exercise will do you good. And now, good-bye until to-morrow."

A woman hastened along the path, her bare feet and legs showing under her tucked-up skirt, a large basket poised upon her head.

The haymakers, having finished loading the wagon, were putting on their jackets; a creaking of the harness, a rumbling of wheels, and slowly the wagon lumbered out of sight.

An angry gust of wind made a whirlwind of the stray blades of hay and shook the glicinies about Clara's head, a shower of violet petals dropped. She lingered still, inhaling the pungent, bracing air, thrilling with half-formed hopes.

"Signora Contessa," whispered a voice. "On the outside, Contessa. At the foot of the wall."

Clara looking down, saw a boyish face.

"I'm no robber, Signora, no beggar. I have a letter from Memmo. Put out your hand as far down as you can."

The boy tried to climb the wall, but the creeping plants gave way and he slipped back.

"Cannot you come round by the gate?"

"Memmo forbids. Let us try again."

Unfastening her belt, Clara let it down.

"Fasten your message to the clasp," she whispered.

Her eyes filled with tears, but what a strange love letter! It was a half sheet of coarse yellow paper folded and fastened by a wafer, creased and stained, as if handled by unclean hands.

"Carissima. Be of good cheer; things will turn out all right. As you love me, obey this, my first command: Never to anyone, under any circumstances, admit of having seen me at your house. Yours. *Usque dum vivem et ultra.*"

Over and over Clara read it, trying to understand. The way in which the letter had been given to her, the obscurity of the wording, the careful avoidance of every name and address, would have suggested a doubt but she knew the handwriting and the favorite quotation that ended it. O, why had she not pressed the messenger with questions? She retraced her steps and entered the dining room. Giovanni, handing the menu to his mistress said,

"Signor Sparnieri begs to be excused; he left this morning for Venice."

Giovanni's manner told Clara that this was not true. Clara perceived a conspiracy of silence and mystery about her. The hush of the house had never been more ostentatious. After pacing the room, trying to argue herself into quiet, she felt that she must see Memmo and ask for an explanation of this strange letter. Nothing could be as bad as this agony of uncertainty. She could not send a mes-

senger, no servant now in the house could be trusted.

She rang her bell and, to her surprise, Maria answered and explained that Lucia had received bad news from her people last night and had left "with the padrone's consent" early in the morning.

Clara resented this new interference of Daniele's. Maria's office at the gate was tolerable, because it did not bring her into close contact, and Clara believed that she obliged her mother by ridding her of Daniele's favorite. But to have Maria act as her own maid was unendurable; she would so tell master Daniele.

Clara had not left the Villa grounds since her first meeting with Memmo, and she guessed that her going out to-day would be commented upon; yet she hardly expected to see such distress as she now read on Maria's face, on receiving the order to prepare for her dressing. When at last she came down ready, she found that no order had been sent to the stables for her carriage.

"The horses are all away. Gone to Tombolo for a week," explained Giovanni. "Signor Sparnieri gave the order last night."

This last instance of Daniele's interference exasperated Clara beyond words. She walked toward the gate, so excited as not to notice the change of weather.

The trees along the avenue cracked and groaned under the libeccio. In front of the gate the tornado pounced upon her with howls of fury.

On the Passeggiata everything shared her agita-

tion. The sea rising in mountains of white foam, the trees twisting their branches, the whirling columns of dust, the roaring of the breakers, the groaning of the pines, the clattering of timber and flapping of torn canvas from the bathing establishments, made a concert of noises, a spectacle of ruin, in strange contrast with the clearness of the blue sky overhead and the sunshine brightening the distant prospect.

Tempest and havoc on earth, an immensity of peace above; was it a presage? Bending forward to resist the fury of the wind, Clara made her way along the *Passeggiata*. Only when she came nearer to the city she noticed men watching the havoc which the storm had made.

Clara walked up to a group of men close to the opening of a square, and asked where Professor Deleani lived.

"Never heard of him," answered one of the men. "Are you sure of the name?"

"Sure, and I have been directed to *Piazzi delle Isole*."

"This is *Piazza delle Isole*."

A messenger boy, hurrying past, turned round: "Well!" shouted the boy. Don't you know where Memmo lives? Look here, Signora, that small house. Ask for Signora Beltrani."

When Signora Beltrani came to the door her voice sounded hoarse with querulous rudeness.

"I am sorry, Signora, if you have come in this

weather to see Renza who is not at home. She has gone to Florence for a few days."

"I do not ask for Renza, Signora. I want to see Professor Deleani. Will you please tell him that—his cousin wishes to see him."

Signora gazed astonished.

"So you are a cousin of Memmo's! And you remember your cousinship to-day only? And it's here you come for information?"

Signora's scorn made Clara's cheek flush. She followed Signora into the parlor and there noticed a telegram on the table.

"I am Clara D'Abbia and I insist on seeing my cousin!"

"Well, that beats me! It is rather late to remember your cousinship? And his need of assistance!"

"Assistance! Is he ill?"

There was no mistaking the emotion which made Clara's cheek pale and her limbs tremble, and Signora Beltrani quickly repented her ill humor.

"No! No! He is not ill, O Vergine Santa! That would be the last drop, no, he is all right, but—but you know where—where he has been—these two long months? Don't you?"

Clara could not speak.

"Come and sit down here. Why your hand is as cold as ice! Now you must not see the devil blacker than he is. The prison cannot keep him, there is hope as long as there is breath, even before a Tribunal."

"Tribunal!" gasped Clara.

"A gentleman, a scholar—he will get out of their claws. At the worst he will get it lightly."

"For God's sake, what is the charge!"

"The charge? Why the thing happened at your place and you know nothing about it? Well, he is charged with having exploded the bomb at your Villa on the first of May. The Court Martial is sitting this very moment in judgment. Nanni—he is my daughter's sposo—has gone to Florence, on purpose to attend the trial and telegraph the proceedings. Renza went two days ago with her aunt as she has something to say to the Court. Nanni says it may free the prisoner—how did he call it, an alibi."

"Indeed! O God! If an alibi can be proved the whole of the absurd charge crumbles and we may hope to see our dear Memmo set at liberty, at once."

"I expect Nanni to be here by the six-fifty train. That is to say, in less than an hour. The Court by that time will have pronounced judgment."

"May I stay here and wait for Nanni's return?"

"Of course you may."

So they sat, side by side, on the sofa, these two women who had never met before; they sat in the communion of anxiety, in the awful suspense which bridges all distinction. A heavy silence had fallen upon them. Clara was unconscious of anything but Memmo's danger.

"At what time is the train due?" whispered Clara.

"Not yet, dear child. Trains are always late," while she strained her ears for the rumble of wheels,

knowing that Nanni might be coming at every moment.

And now from the streets she heard a sudden outburst of cries, the newsboys were shouting out the evening supplements that had been kept back in anticipation of the sentence. Clara and Signora sat breathless, their life centered in their ears.

Now a distant rumble of wheels grew louder; it stopped under the widow. A hurried step on the stairs.

"Nanni? What news?"

"Terrible," came from the dark.

"Madonna Santissima! Will they shoot him?"

"Worse! It's twenty years."

In the dark he stumbled against a chair and kicked it viciously.

"Sacramento! I would like to kick those cursed hounds! But there's one I would like Cristo to give up in my hands for ten minutes! More shameless than those damned police!

"Who?"

"The woman who has preferred this crime to exposure! The woman who might have saved Memmo by speaking one word by saying just where he had spent the evening of that fatal day! That despicable Contessa D'Abbia——"

"Madonna Santa! Hush, Nanni! She's here!"

When they had lighted a candle, they saw that Clara was lying unconscious on the floor.

CHAPTER XX

EARLY on the morning after the trial, Avvocato Lanza went to Memmo's cell in the prison Delle Murate.

The military tribunals, though not allowing barristers to plead in Court, tolerated the visits of legal advisers for consultation with prisoners previous to their trial, and for one day after it.

By presenting his ricorso, the appellant asserted his right to a revision if the proceedings should be found in any way irregular, and secured a suspension of the sentence until a Board of Magistrates should pass upon the admittance or the rejection of the ricorso. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that Lanza should see Memmo at once, since the Court only allowed twenty-four hours delay in which to ask for a review of the evidence and regularity of procedure, or in which to perfect an appeal to a superior court.

During the trial Memmo had seemed almost to court conviction and the application of an extreme sentence. To the despair of Lanza he had refused to allow Renza to testify in his behalf.

When Lanza entered the cell his first glance at Memmo confirmed his fears, that Memmo would refuse to appeal from the sentence. Simulating cheerfulness he exclaimed,

"I congratulate you, Memmo, on the absurdity of your condemnation! The more crying the injustice, the more certain the redress." He passed his arm round his friend's shoulder, but he turned his head away to conceal his tears. "I'm a regular baby. You must not mind me. I am really satisfied with this sentence and I feel sure of getting you out of prison." He tried to smile.

Memmo laid his hand on Lanza's shoulders, "You are my own brave, devoted friend, I cannot tell how much I appreciate your devotion."

"Wait until my devotion is tested. So far, the military code has prevented my being of assistance, and now, when legal counsel is permitted, the biggest lawyers are claiming the honor of pleading for you. Yours is such a splendid case! The proceedings are full of errors; the sentence contains more reasons for a revision than we will know how to use."

He took several papers from his big leather portfolio and began sorting them on the bed.

"Here is the sentence and here are the notes I jotted down last night, as a preparation for the memoria that we will send to the Judges of Cassazione. It is the epitome of the consultation we held over night. Enrico Ferri, Altobelli, Pescotti, and I. They all mean to plead for you. Cheer up, Memmo! We shall do wonders! The first thing is to obtain the annulment of the irregular sentence by the Corte di Cassazione; the next must be to prepare for the second trial."

Memmo looked gravely into his friend's face.

"Lanza, you are taking useless trouble. My sentence will not be annulled; there will be no second trial."

"You don't mean that you accept this sentence?"

"Yes. I shall accept the condemnation rather than undergo a second trial."

"But this is madness!" exclaimed Lanza, "Accept penal servitude for the best part of a lifetime! It is worse than suicide!"

"I must."

"You must! What does the word mean? What moral law can claim this sacrifice of a human life?"

There was a long silence. Memmo's grave eyes implored a truce, they pleaded that discussion was useless and cruel. Lanza's looks expressed grief and wrath.

"Memmo, do you trust me?"

Memmo grasped his friend's hand.

"I claim the character of an honest man, able to understand the scruples of a delicate conscience, and to weigh the motives that——"

"Yet I cannot approve of this sacrifice. Your motives for acting as you purpose to act are honorable, but they are absurd."

"Stop, Lanza! You have no right to examine my motives. Not one word more on this subject."

"Nay, I will insist," said Lanza, rising and walking to Memmo's side. "As your friend and lawyer I am bound to prevent you from committing practical suicide. A wild infatuation that has already induced you to risk your life in this fraudulent trial

from which you have excluded the entire defence, by discarding all the witnesses who would have proved an alibi. Now you throw up a whole existence, in sacrifice to the same false idol."

Memmo turned ominously, his pale cheek flushed.

"Beware, Lanza! You are forcing me to hear things no man could have uttered in my presence, if I could have kicked him out of it!"

"I am impervious to any insults; you shall listen to me. It is madness to sacrifice your whole life for a woman who prudently kept silent, when one word could have saved you."

Memmo, weakened by sleepless nights, his nerves overwrought by the long imprisonment and the excitement of the trial, with clenched fist rushed at Lanza, and shouted,

"Coward! Shame! Lanza! You insult a woman! The best and most loyal of women, who knows nothing of all this, not even that I have been arrested."

Memmo stopped instantly, conscious of having admitted that which he had so carefully concealed. Turning his back on Lanza he walked to the end of the room, and with closed eyes leaned against the wall.

For one moment Lanza stared at him; then the light dawned. A great hope arose, he hastened away without a word. Memmo realized that his admission of Clara's ignorance of his trial, had suggested to Lanza the idea of asking her assistance. His heart leaped at the prospect of seeing her. But if

she came? If she entreated him? How could he resist her if she begged to share obloquy and ruin with him, rather than be spared by his loss?

Horror stricken, he saw the consequences of a possible weakness; his own guiltless Clara, exposed to the cynical observations of reporters, her imprudence in asking for a secret meeting commented by skeptical lawyers and weighed by inquisitive magistrates! The purity of their mutual affection discussed in special editions of the newspapers and her words, her appearance, described and ornamented with gross insinuations by every petty journalist! Party feeling casting against her the poisoned spear of calumny. To Memmo's extravagantly idealistic and chivalrous nature such a situation would at any time have seemed terrible, now when weakened by prison life and the trial, it seemed monstrous.

Better the life of a convict in some distant island, cheered by the memory of her love, by the consciousness of having saved her from such misery.

* * * * *

Alone in his studio, Lanza sat thinking.

What if Clara refused to come, and Memmo knew that she had been called in vain? That she preferred his ruin to having her own reputation destroyed through a second trial? What if his telegram had been intercepted and the scandal provoked that would make Memmo's sacrifice more bitter because useless.

He had telegraphed with only one clear idea: Con-

tessa D'Abbia was the only person who could save Memmo. If his telegram had reached Leghorn in time, and if Contessa D'Abbia had immediately driven to the station, she might have caught the express that was due at three, if not she would have telegraphed. Every distant steeple had chimed three, and there was no sound of wheels along the solitary street.

The panic stirred by the bread riots first, then the gloom of military rule, and then an intense heat, had depopulated Florence, and, on this sultry afternoon, the narrow Via dell'Oriolo, under the glaring reverberation of heat and light, was like a furnace of fire. Every window was closed and the street deserted when Lanza looked out. His last hope had failed. Then a rumble that grew louder; a cloud of dust whirled round the corner and an automobile stopped in front of his house. A hurried step on the stairs and a woman wrapped in veils stood before him.

"I am Clara D'Abbia! What can I do for Memmo!"

She raised her veil.

"May you be blessed, Signora, for coming! Now Memmo is saved!"

A few minutes later a cab stopped in front of Le Muratore, Lanza and Clara alighted.

The gloomy shadow of the prison weighed upon their spirits. Lanza had never before so completely realized the horror of those prison walls, as now when Clara's arm trembled against his own. And

Clara! Those towering walls, that double gate, its rattling iron bars, the sentinels mounting guard!

They passed through the gateway, through the portcullised passage, into the inner court, whose cloistered porticoes are surmounted by high walls, pierced by rows of small iron-barred windows.

Then to a door bearing the inscription of "Direzione."

"A mere formality," explained Lanza. "A permission for visiting the prisoner. It is never denied the day after the trial."

The door of the waiting room was open, but Lanza kept Clara outside, in the passage. Every shade of misery and vice was represented in the little crowd.

The Direttore, a fat, rosy little man, rose and bowed to Clara, then turned to Lanza.

"Your client is very obstinate, *Avvocato*. He declines to sign his name to the ricorso."

"If you will kindly grant a permission of visit, I trust the Signora may be able to persuade him."

"I am willing to grant such a permission. You know how I feel about Deleani, but—it's hard times for us all, in here. We are puppets, while the officers pull the wires. The officer in command here, Colonel Fabielli, can grant you this permission, and he is coming. Just wait for him."

A long half hour elapsed before the door was flung open and tall and black-haired, in full regimentals, with his sword clanging at his heels, Colonel Fabielli walked in.

"What is the matter, Direttore?"

"It is about Deleani. His counsel, *Avvocato* Lanza, wishes to see him and——"

"No! The ricorso is not signed," said the Colonel without lifting his eyes from the papers.

"He is allowed time until to-night. *Avvocato* wishes to persuade him."

"All the lawyers are eager to persuade their clients when there are fees to be had by pleading. *Avvocato* has been admitted already this morning to the prisoner. He is supposed to have said all he has to say."

"The Signora too has come to try and induce the prisoner to give his signature."

Colonel Fabielli turned and seeing Clara he raised an eyeglass and stared at her.

"I see. *Avvocato* Lanza has secured the collaboration of a gentle influence that will move our obstinate customer from his stubborn purpose. I wonder what you lawyers will ask next? Deleani has seen you once today; there is no reason why he should see you twice; no reason why he should see anyone else."

"We generally allow many permissions on this first day——"

"You generally allow many things, *Signore Direttore*, which it would be better to forbid. A little military discipline will teach you how to tighten the reins."

Clara's look of entreaty urged the Director to make one last effort.

"Even under the military regulations we have never yet denied these permissions on the day immediately following the condemnation."

Without removing his eyes from Clara's face the officer's expression changed to brutal impertinence.

"That may depend on—many things."

Clara gazed first at one then at the other speaker; amazed she walked up to the table and looked at the officer across it. Her look was so straight, her attitude so queenly that for an instant he shrank under the challenge of those fearless eyes.

"I understand, Signore Colonello, that you have the power, if you have the will, to grant me this request."

"We are but the instruments of the law; part of the machinery. See here, in the regolamento three degrees of relationship are considered particularly, the wife, mother and sister; the others not being mentioned, are left to our discretion. I can stretch my discretionary power if some—adequate reason is offered."

To Clara he whispered,

"I'll believe any statement you wish to make as to your relationship to the prisoner, if it is to oblige you."

Clara recoiled. Her tall figure straightened, as she said,

"I beg admittance to the prisoner on the plea that I love him."

Colonel Fabielli winced.

"This degree of relationship is not considered in the regulations," he said with a leer.

Then he walked from the room.

* * * * *

When the distant bells had rung the Ave Maria, Memmo tried to persuade himself that if Lanza had been able to arrange a private interview by special permission, there was yet time. He would not give up hope.

With the failing light of day Memmo's hope died. Despair gripped his soul! Clara refused to come! She had been deaf to Lanza's appeal! Death itself would have been less bitter than this proof of her desertion!

A commotion in the passage outside, the thud of muskets grounded at his door, which opened to admit a tall figure in full regimentals, and four soldiers behind him:

"I have come to hear your decision about your appeal! My duty, as officer in command here, is to warn you that the time is almost up. When I leave this room repentance will come too late. Military discipline admits of no delay."

"I claim the right of consulting my legal advisor."

"You saw Avvocato Lanza this morning. The military code is not to be trifled with. Admittance has been denied to him, and to another visitor; admittance will be denied to every applicant unless you sign the paper and assert your right to be considered an appellant."

Colonel Fabielli's tone was taunting, his eyes fixed

on the prisoner seemed eager for sight of his agony. But Memmo's face shone with joy at the Colonel's words, "another visitor."

"Have you heard my question, prisoner?"

She had come! She had tried to see him! She would have entreated him to save himself, at any cost for herself?"

"Not one minute longer, Colonello. I decline to sign the appeal. I accept my sentence."

CHAPTER XXI

ATTENDED by Lanza, Clara consulted the best lawyers in Florence and Rome, and also interceded with men who could influence the Government. Her beauty moved her hearers and her earnestness enlisted their help.

"Tell me something about this Merletti we are going to consult," said Clara to Lanza, as the carriage rolled toward the Borgo San Spirito.

"Merletti? He is vulgar, violent, and sincere. His Parliamentary speeches are like him."

"You wish to speak to the Onorevole? Well! he won't be long."

Tall, square-shouldered and stout, Merletti came in noisily.

"Lanza, good day! Contessa, my respects! I hear you are trying to obtain a revision of the Deleani case. You know I am entirely at your disposal."

"We want you to direct us——" began Clara.

"Deleani's case——"

"A joke, Lanza! Do you think the Court Martial swallowed that hoax about the bomb? Not a bit! They sentenced him because they wanted him out of the way. How is he? How does he endure this confinement?"

Without waiting for an answer Merletti continued:

"The question is: What will be the attitude of the Cassazione? When will they meet? Now look here! If the Corte di Cassazione recognize the validity of sentences pronounced in accordance to the Military Code and the Court Martial proceedings, we should have to wait for the next revolution—a matter of four or five years."

Clara insisted: "There are so many facts that have not been examined, witnesses that have not been heard——"

"Of course there are, and if the revision is granted, there's no doubt of its results, but if—if you get your revision—— But the important question now, is how to obtain his transfer from this mediaval Murate, a hell in summer. Influence and—money will help and you possess levers that move the world." He smiled kindly, "Why don't you go to Rome?"

"A train starts at three-twenty."

"Take it! Listen to me, Signora, I'd aim at the top. The highest are the most attainable. Trust your powers, they are great, and trust your cause—it is also great."

In Rome, while the botte drove up the steep Via Rasella and then passed the Quattro Fontane, Lanza explained to Clara that Feltri had arranged the audience with General Ardiglioni and would introduce her.

"I'm better out of the way here. The General

may be persuaded to grant something, as a favor to you; my presence might chill his good will."

When the botte stopped in front of the Ministero della Guerra, Feltri came out from a group of officers. His chivalric devotion shone in his eyes, as he saluted Clara. The love of those old Venetian days had been more than a passing fancy.

"Thank you for granting me this privilege of being of use to you. I have spoken to General Ardiglioni. Will you allow me to wait for you, when you come out?"

Clara thanked him and was ushered into the office of the Commando di Stato Maggiore.

A little elderly man advanced toward her, looked at her face with tired eyes, and in a low voice bade her sit down.

"Yes, it is a sad case," he said slowly. "The hand of Military Justice has fallen heavily. The teaching was good but painful to endure. It is equally painful to administer the correction."

His face assumed a look of gentle mildness which encouraged Clara.

"My cousin has been unfairly treated."

"I cannot listen to any charge against an officer, unless it is supported by unquestionable evidence."

"I see; Fabielli is rough-handed and has been very rude. He wasn't the right man for that place. A man of the world, a younger and more tactful man, could have softened the application of the military law. But young men will not accept those unpopular

posts. Your friend Feltri, for instance, declined the offer, which was a promotion."

"He may be persuaded," said Clara, blushing.

"He may. Yes!" echoed the General, as he held the door open for her to pass.

"Feltri, will you accept for my sake?"

They were standing now at the door of the stairs, in front of the carriage, and the sun shone brightly on Feltri.

"Anything and everything, mia Signora."

Not all the influence exerted by Clara, not all the money lavished in his cause, could have so effectively alleviated Memmo's prison life as his own personal charm.

Rude guardians who had nothing to expect from him, men who had never spoken a kind word to anyone, were softened by the invisible flame. Callous jailors would steal into his room and help him make his bed, or sweep his cell. He had the largest morsel of meat twice a week, and a well-filled basin of beans or greens, which were the ordinary fare.

On a warm afternoon of October, Memmo was surprised by a visit of his Director.

"I have good news for you, Deleani. We have arranged for your immediate removal to the Penitentiary, on the plea of overcrowding here, and of your good behavior."

Memmo's look showed his gratitude.

"I am very—very glad for you," said the Director, "The more so because you are sent to

Capraia, where the discipline is comparatively mild. Capraia is granted, either as a reward after many years of good conduct in some other galera, or conceded as a favor on the demand of some influential person."

The Director's smile was so significant that Memmo's heart leaped with joy. He owed this mitigation to Clara!

Capraia, a tiny islet only twenty miles from Leghorn! In clear weather, with a glass, even the houses were distinguishable from the mainland. The air was bracing, refreshed by the sea breeze and perpetual sunlight. The prison regulations were the mildest in Italy, the present Director, a middle-aged man, who grumbled continually and rarely punished.

"The convoy starts early to-morrow morning, so you had better make your preparations to-night. You can take with you one change of linen, and one-half loaf of bread."

On the following morning, the tramp of soldiers sounded in the corridor and two carabinieri entered Memmo's cell. They helped him strap his few belongings on his shoulder; then they handcuffed him and marched down the stairs to the central hall.

The sight of other convicts in their striped suits, their close-cropped heads and shaven faces, their hands manacled, recalled Memmo to saddening reality. All the stigmata of vice, of hardship, of degeneracy were stamped on those faces, which imprisonment had made pale, and repressed passions

had made hard. One by one, they were led out, scowling on their mates. There was no comradeship.

When Memmo was led out he noticed a sad group of persons pressing silently against the double iron bars of a little gate. Pale, haggard faces, shrunk figures in rags, lean, dirty hands that clutched at the first grating or with suppressed sobs and curses strove to reach the second. Instead of crossing in the middle of the court, the carabinieri led Memmo along the wall, close to the gate. He felt one of the carabinieri fumbling at his wrist.

"Not a word, prisoner. Walk up to the gate."

The handcuffs had slipped off, the carabinieri concealing Memmo from the officer.

Memmo saw the group of wretches behind the gate grovelling on the ground as Lanza scattered a handful of silver as far away as he could, so as to remove the beggars from the bars before he walked up to it, with Clara, her cheeks hollow and her eyes burning, but with her ineffable smile. In spite of the tears rolling down her face, she beamed with love! Their eyes met, their souls clung to one another, in a spiritual embrace! Above all the present misery, all possible grief, in some ethereal sphere they met, in perfect unison, in infinite love!

Clara's hand, stretched between the iron bars, thrills him with her soft touch.

"Now go quickly," whispers the carabinieri.

Memmo with breaking heart breathes, "Addio!"

Clara staggers, but whispers:

"No, Memmo, not 'addio'! A rivederci!"

"A rivederci!" echoes Lanza as he urges Clara out of sight, before the carabinieri slips the handcuffs round Memmo's wrists.

CHAPTER XXII

FROM the prison van into the railway prison car—vagone cellulare—composed of a double row of small cells opening on a central passage, guarded by two carabinieri; there Memmo was locked into a space so narrow that he could neither turn round nor stand up, during the long seven hours journey from Florence to Pisa. Yet nothing could quench Memmo's exultation. He saw the tear-stained face radiant with love; he still heard the dear voice, quivering with passion.

"Non addio, Memmo! A rivederci!"

Words of promise, as well as of encouragement, and Lanza had repeated them with conviction.

Thus the tedious hours passed unnoticed. The closeness of the car could not distract Memmo's thoughts, though it made the carabinieri in the corridor gasp for a breath of air.

At Montelupo the train stopped and the other prisoners were led out of their cages and driven down the ladder. An iron chain linked together these samples of human degradation. They were marched to the neighboring casa di reclusione where the torture of perpetual solitude and silence awaited them.

After leaving Pisa, when the green tops of the trees and the freshening breeze warned Memmo they

were crossing the thickets of the Royal preserve San Rossore, the train stopped and one of the carabinieri said:

"I reckon you will keep quiet if we take you along with us on to the platform."

He tested the solidity of the handcuffs, ostentatiously assured himself that his pistol was sticking out of his own belt, and preceded the prisoner along the passage while his comrade followed close in the rear.

The quiet of solitude and woodland and the falling day came to Memmo's throbbing nerves. Across the plain a hunter, carrying his gun and a game bag, slowly approached. The younger Tuscan carabinieri exclaimed:

"Why here is a friend of mine. Good day, Nanni. How do you happen to be away from San Gemignano just in the shooting season?"

Nanni's surprise was cleverly assumed.

"I've got a permission for running about Tombolo and San Rossore. It's quite regular. Do you want to see it? But you, what are you camping in the woods for?"

"Waiting for nightfall and a carriage. We've got a passenger here for the Penitentiary, a big fish, and we are driving him directly to the piers, without crossing through the city. What have you got in that game bag?"

"Only some quail; my landlady, Signora Beltrani, told me they must be good this year since the olives have been plenty."

As he mentioned Signora's name Nanni darted a quick glance at Memmo.

"I have been tramping these woods for several days, looking for big game, but now—I think I'll give it up."

He rose, readjusted the straps of his gun, and bag, across his shoulder and pretended to discover Memmo.

"Your passenger? I've got some of the cigars you used to like, may I throw you a box?"

"Bring them here. Real Minghetti," said the carabinieri, appreciatively.

"Keep the whole box, I've plenty more at home. You need something to cheer you up a bit in this weather. Depressing work this must be—even for you."

"It's worse for this poor devil!"

"A quiet customer. A gentlemen, you know, and a scholar, I am told."

"Poor fellow! Has he nothing warmer than the cotton suit?" asked Nanni carelessly. "Let him have this old cloak—with your leave of course. My landlady gave it to me, thought she knew it's so poor that I have no use for it."

"You'll get scolded."

"As she is going to be my mother-in-law I must get used to her scolding. Good-bye, boys! A pleasant crossing to you!"

He flung the cloak to the carabinieri, and walked quickly away without glancing at Memmo.

The carabinieri consulted about the cloak and finally the Tuscan said:

"I'll take my chance of a reprimand, but I cannot disoblige Nanni," and he placed the cloak on Memmo's shoulders.

How soft and light it felt, how grateful he was to Signora Beltrani for her love and pity!

After nightfall a carriage drove them round the walls of the town to the sea.

All around on the landing-steps of the doganna, on the wharfs, at the windows, a silent crowd. Then something, a wave of sighs swept over the crowd, slowly the carabinieri walked on each side of him. The soldiers, standing stiffly, seemed a guard of honor; the rowers pushed the boat alongside the landing. An old woman pressed her wrinkled face and tearful eyes between the soldiers.

"Be kind to him, carabinieri, and I'll say a *Salvo Regnia* for you at Montenero!"

"Sons of the people, he is one of us!" whispered a young man.

"For the sake of your mothers," wailed a woman's voice, "be kind to him."

The carabinieri stood impassive; the rowers helped Memmo into the boat, then pushed away from the shore.

The harbor swarmed with rowboats, filled with silent men. When Memmo turned round; all heads were uncovered, the silence was still unbroken.

"For their sakes," whispered the carabinieri, "get out of sight."

The crossing to the island of Capraia was unusually rough; the ship toiled all night against the angry libeccio, but when at daybreak she stopped in front of the Penitentiary the sun shone out, the wind had fallen, the sea was calm. The massive pile of the ancient monastery studded with turrets and battlements towered over the hill and stretched the white enclosure of its walls quite to the shore. The light green of the olive groves, the gorgeous hues of fading vineyards made a background to the picture.

Thus the verdant island must have basked in the sun, cradled in the emerald sea, when, during the Middle Ages, the first monks came to its coast. Thus it had yielded scanty food and shelter to the settlers under the protection of Spanish garrisons. And now, over other miseries and woes, under other tyrannies and oppressions, nature still smiled over land and sea.

A little rowboat left the pier and approached the ship. The rowers wore the striped jacket and the oilskin cap of convicts, and the goaler, who sat at the stern, had a pistol hanging on each side of his belt.

Next morning when the head guard called him Memmo he was ready to accept any burden, any suffering.

They walked along the cloisters and Memmo noticed the ancient cells transformed into a row of small workshops for the various trades allowed in the Colony.

When at their work these men looked like

ordinary workmen; it was only in the intervals of rest that memory brought back the scowl of passion, or the lines of despondency.

Memmo was summoned into the low rough raft-ered room which bore the words *Direzione*, where a bulky man lounged in an easy chair, smoking.

"Where are you, Doctor? Here is a new arrival to examine."

With the thud, thud of a cork leg beating on the rough flags, a diminutive man limped from the inner room. He turned to Memmo:

"Unfasten your necktie, prisoner, and take off your jacket! As sound as a bull," he pronounced after putting a finger on Memmo's pulse and laying his ear against his chest. "He may be sent to work in the fields."

The Director glanced at the documents which the head guard had brought in.

"I see you were a teacher. What did you teach?"

"Organic chemistry at the *Istituto Tecnico*. I received my diploma in Rome, but I studied at Padua."

"Why haven't you given a number to the prisoner?" said the Director. "Do so immediately and send him in charge of Masoni to gather olives."

The work was not tiring and the company of the other men was made endurable by the prohibition to talk.

The real torment began at night.

When Memmo first entered the dormitorio he reeled at the poisonous smell. There was a square

window high in the wall but the convicts closed it before undressing, and Memmo's gorge rose as they shed their outer garments and uncovered the filthy clothing underneath. At the foot of every bedstead there was a wooden stool upon which these horrid rags were heaped, rank with the sweat of unwashed bodies. In five minutes the silence bell rang.

O! This awful nightmare! Of the whispered indecent talk! Twenty years among these animals. Day and night! No privacy and yet no companionship! Not one moment from these sights and smells. His heart sank, terror crushed him. Nor did the night bring relief. Under the pall of the poisoned atmosphere, the groanings and mutterings, the snoring, the chattering of teeth, Memmo now believed in hell.

He pressed his face between his hands, he tried to pity this misery and endure this contact. In vain! His spirit recoiled from the degradation of these souls, his senses recoiled from the stench of these unwashed bodies.

When a streak of light began to filter in he looked at his nearest companions. The bed on his right hand was occupied by a tall, sallow Neapolitan, with a broken nose, and scars across his cheeks. On his left hand a young Sicilian was sleeping soundly.

"You don't like the place," whispered the Neapolitan. "No one likes it at first—but after awhile—now, *parola d'onore*, I like it well enough."

"You have been long here?"

"Two years and ten days, and I have four more

years before I can accomplish my vow. I was a capo delle zoccole for many years, and I never got into trouble with the police. The mustacchioni suspected me. Never meddle with 'U Santariello.' Every night I went about a rafo, and sometimes I had to mozzicare a gatta, which is always a dangerous thing in our trade."

Memmo shuddered as he guessed the meaning of the camorrist terms.

"I was very clever for preparing affairs, un basista of great experience, and I had my men so well trained that we were the most prosperous zoccole in all Santa Lucia. Once we had arranged that a whole cargo of hides from Calcutta—should be whisked away under the very nose of the liberanos, and exchanged for a counterfeit cargo of rubbish. The good hides should have come to our dock, the bad ones to the steamer. We were all serpi ratti and brethren of our zoccole. Everything went off beautifully, the American skipper took in the rubbish and sailed away, the dock men allowed our goods to be stored—we were rejoicing over a dish of tagliatelle e vongole when—malnaggia li mortacci suoi, one damned fusillo, a Calabrese whom I had suspected from the first, 'ate the leaf' Sanguè di San Gannaro. The mustacchioni surrounded the osteria, we were all trapped. I, being the chief, provided for the safety of the others and they escaped."

The cappo d'elle zoccole cursed the traitor who had sold his brethren.

"As I held the door fast for my men to get out

by a secret passage, I called out to them, "Mind me, boys, don't kill him. Leave that for me. It's a vow."

Memmo looked up startled.

"Yes, I said it was a 'vow,' else they would have deprived me of that pleasure."

"Why, then you will be brought back here?"

"No, not here; a recidivo is sent to Porto Longone or to Nisida, and then I will also be put in irons; but—I don't care, if only I can see him with his entrails bursting from his belly! You know the blow—zac! Rip him right up, then a twist—it never fails!"

Memmo turned his head horrified. The Neapolitan, believing that he was interested in the boy sleeping in the next bed, said:

"Nice little chap! As brave as a tiger! Heard his mother had a lover—you see, in Sicily they make such a fuss about a woman's behavior—as if it mattered. Well, the boy watched, he pretended to go away and then came back during the night—piff, paff—a bullet right through each of them, as neat as can be. Then, he stretched himself on the ground at the foot of the bed and went to sleep." The Neapolitan laughed heartily. "The proverb is right; fortune smiles on sleepers. His clever avvocato was up to the newest wrinkle; he pleaded that this sudden sleep was a symptom of epilepsy, hence that the boy was not sane when he committed his crime. There were some big protectors. Only ten

years he has taken. With two corpses in his affair! That's luck!"

The Sicilian boy opened his large velvet eyes and smiled pleasantly, then crossed himself and said, "Good day chums. May God and the bedda Madre shield us from evil!" Then he again closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Memmo's torture began in the morning, with the sight and smell of these human cattle shaking themselves out of their litters, and clothing their unwashed bodies in filthy garments, and it continued through all the incidents of daily life. At mealtime round the walls of a narrow room, breast high, a rough board was fixed on which each convict placed the basin he had received from the cook, and in this position, with their faces to the wall like beasts, they gulped their victuals.

"You are a fool, Thirty-three, if you don't eat your food. You must look sharp if you want to get along here. You must get some money from home or make some here, else the scanty food will kill you. Then you must always be plaguing the direction with demands. 'The toad that did not claim was left without a tail.' I have made such a bother with petitions presented by Members of Parliament, and with medical certificates, that I have been three times removed from one place to another. Once I shammed tuberculosis—that's easy when you have a sick pal to use your spittoon—because I wanted to see Pianosa, a sort of sanitarium for convicts. There I had my bottle of milk and

two eggs every day, but then the sight of the sick men depressed me and I became afraid of contagion, so I persuaded the doctor he had cured me—and here I am.”

“What had you done to be sent here?” asked Memmo.

“I owed a grudge to my brother-in-law. I shot him through the ear. Five years for that! Then a guard annoyed me and I kicked out one of his eyes; I got two more years for that! Seven years for taking a double satisfaction! I call that cheap. My wife is waiting for me at home as good as a saint. What more can I ask?”

Not one of these convicts ever showed remorse; or regretted his crime. Passion had not cooled; the thirst for revenge had grown fiercer, though at times the object of hate shifted from the dead to the witness who had played false, to the unfaithful wife or to the sweetheart who did not wait patiently for the murderer.

That constant preoccupation about the fidelity of wife or mistress was the excruciating torment of all these men. In the absence of all healthy diversion, sexual interests became the sole object of thought, the perpetual subject of conversation, frequently a mania.

They could tell how in the reclusorio of Porto Longone a man had been starved to death on his “bed of force” because his jailer had forgotten him after binding and gagging him. How another prisoner had been so kicked and beaten that he had died

on his bed, and how the guards had thrown the corpse out of the window so as to pretend that the broken ribs and bruises had been caused by his fall. They could describe the cell, called after Passanante, whence this celebrated idiot had been carried away, a confirmed lunatic. Damp, infested with rats, yet less horrible than those round cells in Volterra where a man became raving mad in less than a year. As long as the farm work lasted Memmo tried to shut his eyes against the sight of his companions, but the winter days were spent in a tiny room where ten men and two looms were crowded. The small, grated windows were covered with a close net of wire. There amid unwashed bodies, the hovering dust, the whirl of wheels, the clattering of shuttles, the murmur of sullen voices, spinning with a hand-wheel, Memmo spent the winter season. He grew dazed; his sight was dimmed by revolving circular lines, that blazed and sputtered even behind his closed lids. His ears heard the rumbling sound, even during the night.

He drifted into the apathy of despair; he neglected his personal appearance; and for two consecutive days he could not understand the sense of the words in the one volume which convicts were allowed to retain. Was his intellect giving way as that of others had done? He buried his face in his hands and yearned for complete insanity, or for a merciful death.

CHAPTER XXIII

SIGNORA BELTRANI anxiously watched the progress of Nanni's long courtship. Of course, Renza knew nothing about men, while Nanni could not be expected to know how to deal with such a lady as Renza, these young people should avail themselves of her experience in arranging their lives, and—she was eager to give it.

The line must be drawn somewhere. She could neither oppose Renza's conscientious scruples, nor sympathize too openly with Nanni's impatience, yet delay was dangerous. She worried over imaginary dangers because she theoretically believed all men faithless, and all maidens frail.

Renza did not "know why the earth was rolling" but just trusted "to God who is an old Saint" to arrange her affairs. "Help thyself and I'll help thee" was the right motto.

Was it not aggravating to see that child "with her face as pale and wan as a witch's" bending over that embroidery frame and stitching away, in this close room, when she might be breathing the bracing spring air of the hills in San Gemignano? Was it not provoking to hear her sigh, when she should be laughing and happy in her own house?

In the fast falling light of the soft April evening,

they sat at their usual places, the silence only broken by the clicking of the Signora's needles or the snap of Renza's scissors.

"Nanni is late to-night," remarked Signora.

"He is often later," replied Renza listlessly.

"He has some excuse for it. I wonder he comes at all. There are not many young men who would be so patient. Trust me, Renza, you are playing a dangerous game. The strongest rope will snap if you pull on it too long. I was not born yesterday, and I can tell you that men are *men*, not convent girls, and that if you trifle with fire, you may get scorched."

"Mother, spare your breath and proverbs. I cannot marry and feel happy as long as Memmo is . . . where he is . . . by my fault."

Signora dropped her knitting, rubbed her spectacles fiercely, then she rose and walked up to Renza.

"Do you think I am not as deeply grieved on his account as you are? God and the blessed Madonna of Montenero be my witnesses! I would gladly give my life to see him free; but, since he will not be helped, what good is it to distress Nanni and exasperate him until—until—— Can you not see, child, that he is like a cat in January, bristling up to his ears with restrained excitement?"

"Mother! Indeed! I cannot."

Renza put both her elbows on the frame, and hid her face in her hands.

"Let me put your thoughts into words, cara. You

are persuaded that if you had shown Clara's note that it must have saved Memmo, and you forget that you did try to be a witness; it was Memmo's refusal that prevented you. Memmo would not permit Lanza to have you testify."

"I should have gone to Lanza sooner."

"Fammi indovino non saro meshino (make me a prophet and I will keep out of trouble). But even if you had testified, and the note had been shown, it is so worded that it might be easily twisted into a charge of complicity against Donna Clara——"

"If only Memmo could have been spared."

"Madonna di Dio! Can you not see that Memmo has ruined his cause solely to shield Donna Clara? Perbacco! He would rather have got ten years more than have had her name mentioned in court! Ah me! That's the way of the world! It all hangs on one peg—Love! Memmo is suffering imprisonment for the sake of his sweetheart, and Nanni is, for your sake, sentenced to purgatory, always running on errands, talking to lawyers, hunting out information, while you deny him his reward."

Vainly did Signora try to persuade; vainly did she smooth and caress the drooping head. Renza would not be comforted. Only when Nanni's soft whistle came from the Piazza below, and when his quick step was heard on the stairs, Renza wiped her tears.

Nanni's face was beaming.

"Kiss me, Renza, and Mamma, you must give a good hug too! Such glorious news! Something that

will make these dear eyes brighten . . . something that we had thought almost hopeless."

"Madonna Santa! Is it about Memmo?"

"You have guessed, Mamma. The Deleani case will be revised. The decree is issued ordering a 'supplemento d'inchiesta per legittima suspicione.'"

"Renza, don't you hear? Without his asking, by order of the Procuratore del Re, a new inquest will be started *ex nova*. There has been a denunciation of perjury and another of subornation duly notified to the Procuratore del Re, and this, as Lanza has explained to me, is enough to invalidate the whole proceedings."

Signora exploded questions.

"I never doubted that there were false and suborned witnesses, but which of them has split?"

"There! You could never guess. Lanza pretends that he did, but it's only 'giudizio del poi che non son piene le fosse.' The worst scoundrel——"

"Daniele?"

"For God's sake don't mention his name. He must not know. It's Vigo."

"What has Vigo to do in the affair?"

"He has written a denunciation to the Procuratore del Re, giving such accurate information about the explosion, as to clearly prove that Rosita's testimony was false."

"Memmo will be set at liberty at once?"

"Adagio Biagio! It will take weeks for a Giudice d'Istruzione to collect the materials of his inquest;

and then the new trial. But with influence and money Donna Clara's Memmo will surely be acquitted."

Signora sat pondering.

"I will go at once to congratulate my dear Donna Clara . . ."; but it would not be proper to leave the 'sposi' alone together in the house.

"I thought, Nanni, you might feel tired after going about all day," she presently suggested, with a deprecatory smile.

"So I am, and I mean to be off to the rooms where you have exiled me. Yet if you are in a hurry to go, please make no compliments. Mamma, I'll put up with Renza's company for a while."

"Surely, Nanni, you will go with me? I am afraid to go alone."

Signora, interpreting the look in Nanni's eyes, disappeared into her own room, leaving him the opportunity for the tete-a-tete, which her notions of propriety admitted, though it forbade her keeping Nanni as a boarder after he had become Renza's accepted fiancé.

"Will this good wind bring no change in your decision?" asked Nanni, bending timidly over Renza. "I have waited patiently; I would have served all my life faithfully but . . . if others are going to be happy, why should I be kept in pain?"

He put his hand under Renza's chin forcing her to look up into his face. Renza nestled closer to him and whispered, "Nanni mio."

"Yes, cara, yours body and soul."

"Nanni, you are too good for me," she breathed.

"That is not the answer I want, I must have a date fixed."

He tightened his clasp so that she felt him trembling.

"As soon as you like," she whispered.

There they sat in the darkening twilight, throbbing and quivering youth, singing the oldest and yet newest and sweetest song to the quiescent evening breeze, to the first stars peeping in through the flowered balcony.

Nanni insisted on putting Signora in a cab, as it was so late, when she started for Ardenza.

Even at this late hour, the gate was open and unwatched.

"What rascals these retainers are. That fool, Maria, is old enough to mind her business and keep at her post."

The stars shone so that she could discern the white wall of the lodge. The door was open and the entrance room was dark. Maria had deserted her post.

"This dear Contessa is betrayed worse than Christ among the Jews! Why not a second bomb?"

She knocked and then walked in, groping toward a pencil of light, and tapped against the door of the inner room. Someone there was moaning and weeping behind that door. She opened it and entered.

The light from the shaded lamp fell on the foot of the bed. There, crouching on the ground, Maria sobbed piteously.

"Maria! What has happened? Are you hurt? Sick?"

Signora knelt by the prostrate form.

"Sick, you say? Would I were dying, so I could go with Rosita."

"She was in Florence, wasn't she?"

"She was!" Maria broke into passionate sobbing. "Look at her!"

Poor, poor Rosita! Her little shaven head resembled a skull, that moved ceaselessly. The meningitis was confirmed by her livid, pinched features.

"Rosita, ill?"

"Rosita dying! Rosita murdered!" cried the mother. "Murdered! Yes, my child dies murdered! Her own father has murdered her, body and soul! O Dio Cristo! that such things should be!"

"Compose yourself, Maria. Let me go for a doctor."

"Doctors enough she has had, poor angel. They have helped murder her.

"In Florence they galvanized her so that she might play her rôle before the Military Judges, tormented her, distracted her—Cristo di Dio! Be thou her avenger!"

Signora raised her hand in solemn warning. "Maria do not curse in the presence of death."

Maria fell across the bed; she clasped the unconscious form.

"O Rosita! Rosita killed by my sin! Damned by my sin! I have allowed your soul to be lost

through my sin! Rosita, see my repentance! Forgive me before you die!"

The child's features relaxed. A gurgling in her throat, a white foam rose to her livid lips.

"Hear me, Rosita! Hear me! I swear your death shall be avenged! He who has brought you to this, shall suffer in hell!"

"Kneel down, Maria, and let us pray."

But Maria stood staring at her dying child.

"Mater Dei, ora pro nobis," whispered Signora. Rosita's breathing came by gasps.

"Pater noster quis est," she continued hurrying on to the end of the Rosario.

A shriek from Maria brought Signora to her feet.

"See! She is dead! My child is dead! She dies and the words of absolution have not been spoken for her! Dead! And her soul gone with the burden of unconfessed sin!"

Frightened, Signora tried to restrain the desperate woman.

"Let me go! I must avenge her! I will pay him back! I will kill him! O, the fiend, the Jew, who has brought her to this! He forbade me to call a priest, fearing she might reveal that she had sworn falsely at the trial. And even to-day I would not let Padre Feliciano minister to my dying Rosita! Yet I knew she had sinned!"

Shrieking and tearing her clothes, she collapsed on the floor.

Signora dared not speak; she stared at the piteous sight. Reverently she composed Rosita's stiffening

limbs; placed the crucifix on the dead child's breast and joined over it those wasted hands. From the bureau she took two candlesticks, which she lighted and set on either side of the bed. A priest! Why, it was too late for the Sacraments; it would be money wasted. Signora knelt once more and prayed.

She soon exhausted her small stock of ritual orisons, then she drifted into her habitual mode of prayer. She implored the Father of all men to comfort the miserable wretch writhing here at her side and Memmo in his distant isle.

"What is the use of praying, Adele? What good can that cross do on my child's breast? She is doomed to hell! She is forever lost!"

"Hers is baptized flesh! Her soul may yet be saved, if only we do what is right."

"I cannot offer prayers. I'm too unworthy! I cannot pay for masses and orisons with the money of her murderer!"

As Maria's voice rose shrill and hysterical, Signora laid her hand with authority on her shoulder and mastered her. Then a great light came to her. Maria herself could be made the minister of justice to punish the guilty and aid the innocent.

"Not prayers, Maria, but deeds that will obtain the salvation of Rosita's soul, peace to yours. A great wrong must be undone. Rosita has been used as the tool of hatred; use her now as an instrument of justice."

Maria stared, too dazed to understand the speaker.

"You know that Memmo was sentenced on the false evidence of this poor child; you must go and swear to a magistrate that she was persuaded to perjure herself."

"What? Charge the Master before a magistrate!"

"Do you want Rosita's sin to be forgiven? Or do you prefer her soul to suffer in hell for the wrong she was persuaded to do here?"

"No! I cannot—I cannot deliver the Master into the hands of the law. Not a tribunal; there are too many other things—I cannot!"

So far Signora could sympathize. "Still, Maria, the harm must be undone. O, in pity for the child, find some means!"

Maria buried her face in her hands.

"If you will not speak to a magistrate, let us ask advice from a priest?"

"A priest would not scruple to betray a Jew."

"Then a lawyer? Lanza is kind and wise. He may be able to cancel this wrong without ruining the culprit."

Maria shook her head sullenly. Signora tightened her grasp on Maria's hand.

"Go and tell all to your mistress; she will know how to act!"

Maria started wildly; then she looked at Signora with insane eyes, then burst into an hysterical laugh. She laughed in gasps, she swayed, her features distorted, her limbs twisted.

"Yes, that is an idea! Sara's daughter whom I hate shall deal the blow! From the mouth of one of his children, he shall hear how he has murdered his other child. It will be worse for him than any death. O, thank you, Adele. This is just! She shall charge him with all his crimes—all of them—from the lifeless corpse of murdered old Mose to the lifeless corpse of murdered Rosita both victims of his love for Contessa Clara. And there I will stab him; and there also I will stab Sara, who has been preferred to me!"

Then as if speaking to herself, in a low monotone, "Yes, Contessa Clara shall be told everything that will anger her—but not the one redeeming motive which might stop her mouth. She will call him a thief, a murderer, a forger, and he will have to listen in silence. No! He would rather die than tell her that she also is his child. Ah! Ah! My child was to be the only bastard!"

She kissed the cross upon the lifeless breast.

"You will be avenged, poor martyr. Even before you are laid in the grave."

Far away, the voice of a cock sounded a call, and the distant bells made answer, chiming mattutino. Maria stood in front of the window, in a trance, her face petrified in a tragic mask of passion.

Signora watched, pondering on the best way to secure Maria's revelation, before the ancient love revived to make her repent. When the sun had risen above the distant hills, and the stirrings in the

household became perceptible she noiselessly made her way out across the grounds to a side entrance to the house and to Clara's apartment.

CHAPTER XXIV

DANIELE SPARNIERI slept late and awoke to the glad remembrance of his final victory over Memmo. Memmo's obstinacy and the reluctance of the judges to oppose the military power had sufficed without open participation. Clara could not reproach him and she might in time turn to him as her only protector.

These last months had been exhausting; a criminal trial to direct, a large household to control, so as to prevent all intelligence from coming in and any message going out, to hold Augusto in check, and then to disguise his idiocy, Maria's jealousy to restrain and utilize, Rosita to work on. What mental tension, what nervous strain! But now victory and well-earned repose.

Augusto's paralysis was providential for Daniele. It permitted of his resuming his position as Clara's guardian, as manager of her wealth and her natural protector. He trusted to his unwearied attentions to bring about a complete reconciliation.

On this bright April morning he lingered over his morning toilet and his imagination built castles of pleasant constant intimacy with his child.

The cock crowing and the ringing bells reminded him that this was the hour of morning prayer; the second hour after sunrise.

As he stepped out on the balcony and turned to the east, he saw a light burning in Maria's open window and he wondered if Rosita had grown worse. What a nuisance that child had been to him! Yet hers had been the chief testimony that had convicted Memmo. He prepared for morning worship. He strapped the leather thongs round his head and set the sacred letter in the centre of his forehead; he fastened the other thong round his left arm; then repeated ritual blessings of the God of Israel, who, once more, had avenged the cause of the chosen people! Wrapping his face in the folds of his taled, and kissing its fringes and the knotted and twisted silk threads, he invoked a blessing on Clara. When his daughter's name passed his lips his heart quaked with its passionate love. As he implored the Giver of all blessings that harm should be withheld and happiness granted to her, his soul that knew no remorse quailed with fear of detection. O, for a magic charm that could make him appear good and pure in her eyes!

Even while his lips recited the eighteen blessings of the Hemidah, prayers to the God of Israel, his soul worshipped his own adored child. He sang the glories of the seven cherubim, thrice repeated their words of glorification, but the vision that rose before his covered eyes, was of Clara—his idol. He kissed his book of Tefilah and reverently unfastened the leather thongs strapped round his brow and arm; then he laid them all with the taled in a cabinet

made of cedar wood that had grown on the sacred soil of Sion.

He remembered the light burning in Maria's window at the Lodge. That light at this hour must mean that Rosita had died in the night. The child had always been delicate, surely death was a mercy; sparing her the misery of knowing her illegitimate and penniless condition; a greater mercy to him. This death of his offspring by a Christian mother was a relief.

Daniele knew his power over weak and passionate Maria, but he had for her neither gratitude nor pity. Women are made for the pleasure of strong men and are to be disregarded after the caprice is past; yet Maria must be treated with some consideration since she knew things that might cause trouble if they ever reached Clara's ears.

He would at once send Maria to his villa at Misurina where he needed a housekeeper and at the same time he would rid himself of a dangerous accomplice.

As a skilled actor who disdains no detail of his making up, Daniele examined his appearance in the mirror, in view of the audience he meant to entreat from Clara, and rehearsed the defense he had planned, his answers to her questions.

But there was Maria to dispose of first.

Before going down to the Lodge, he emptied his pockets of most of his money. His check book, too, was better left in his safe, lest in a moment of generosity he might be tempted to give her more than

was necessary. A few hundred lire would be enough.

Daniele found the Lodge silent and apparently deserted. He cautiously entered Maria's room. The place seemed strangely unfamiliar, with those candles burning on each side of the delicate face, beautified by the majesty of death. Maria stared at him, struggling against the spell of his eyes. Daniele calculated about the burial. He was pleased that the sight of his dead child and her mother did not affect him beyond a safe and natural degree of sorrow. He considered the pinched features and livid hue of death, then he turned his cold attention on Maria's face and realized that she had no attraction for him. Flowers would cover one unpleasant sight, money would drive away the other. And still Maria stared.

"Why did you come here?" she hissed. "Your work is done! Are you satisfied?"

"Softly, Maria, I have done everything possible. The best doctors and the best nursing. It was ordained above that she should be taken; you must submit to this divine visitation. Now, Maria, I will see that your child is carried to a decent grave."

Maria burst into hysteric laughter.

"A decent grave! Ha, Ha! That's all you have got for her? And for me? For me?"

"For you, cara, I have thought of immediate compensation——"

"Compensation? Compensation? Can you recall my murdered child to life? Or save her from eternal damnation? You devil! You murderer!

You killed her, you killed her!" she shrieked in frantic iteration.

"Stop that, Maria, or I walk out of this room and never see you again."

"You! Her father!" shrieked Maria. "Murderer, murderer, worse than dog, you have killed your child, your own flesh and bones. Murderer, murderer." With each word the shriek was louder.

Daniele seized Maria's throat, his voice was hoarse with rage and fear.

"Hold your tongue, damn you? Be quiet or I'll kill you like Rosita."

Maria tore his hand from her throat.

"Yes, you will kill me like you strangled old Mose and forced open his safe to steal the papers which proved the marriage of Signor Memmo's parents, and which you gave me to burn, and which I now have in that chest? Do I remember?" she screamed, "Can I forget that terribly unearthly shriek . . . then the gurgling sound in his poor throat! The horrible wriggling of those limbs!"

Daniele struggling to stop her mouth, choking her throat, and swearing; suddenly he felt her collapse in his grip and sink at his feet where she crouched and moaned.

"All, and more than all, have I done for you, Master! For your love I have sinned . . . sinned past forgiveness . . . and you! You spurn me now. You only think of getting rid of me . . . Master, have pity! I would rather die than part from you . . . O Master!"

Maria's sobs melted into inarticulate words. She clutched Daniele's feet imploring him. He looked down upon her, his eyes losing their terror, glistened once more with scorn and cruelty.

"Master! Have pity because of my great love! Have pity for the sake of this our dead child!"

But Daniele only glared hatred as he pushed her body with his foot and moved toward the chest which contained the marriage certificate. In the open doorway, an avenging angel, stood Clara.

Daniele reeled, his teeth chattering.

Clara stood motionless, with blazing eyes, an avenging deity.

"I have heard all, Master Daniele."

"Clara . . ." gasped Daniele. "You cannot . . . You do not . . . believe the ravings of an insane woman."

"A magistrate shall at once decide on the degree of your guilt. Signor Daniele, the day of your reckoning has come; before this sun has set all the world will know that you are a murderer."

"No, Clara! No! Not that . . . Not you!"

"Why not I, Signor Sparnieri? You are nothing to me. Better men than you have died insane in fetters!"

"Clara! Not you! Not you . . . !" he cried in terror.

"You shall have the punishment which you deserve for all your crimes: from Nonno's murder and the disinheritance of Memmo to this last perjury, I will denounce you. Nonno cheated, robbed,

murdered by you. Memmo destroyed, Rosita tormented and finally driven to death by you, then Maria, who stands there ready to follow you like a dog! For shame, Maria! Look at your daughter's corpse and think that she is better there lying ready for the grave than if she had lived to have such a father! Lived to know him for a devil!"

Daniele rushed toward Clara, his hand outstretched.

"Stand off, man! You cannot strangle me as you did my grandfather."

Daniele grovelled at Clara's feet, he clung to her gown, but she snatched it from his grasp.

"Do not dare touch me, vile beast."

The crouching man groaned.

"I have loved you more than life!"

"Do not dare say so! To force on me your vile affection . . ." Her voice rang in his ears like a clarion and her eyes were flaming swords.

"Thank God you are nothing to me; better a thousand deaths than have one drop of your vile blood in my veins, and I shall give you up to the police."

Daniele grovelling again grasped the hem of her skirt. Clara snatched her gown from his grasp, and the heel of her shoe cut his lip, and the blood ran from his mouth.

Maria rushed to him, she lifted his head from the ground and dragged him from the room.

"The police will soon be here. Run Master. Run for your life!"

She pushed him out of the door, and stood watching as he tottered toward the gate.

CHAPTER XXV

ONE short hour before Daniele had left his apartment, in the flush of success; he staggered now out of the Lodge a tottering, shrunk old man.

Like one in a hypnotic trance, he obeyed Maria's suggestion, crossed the few yards between him and the gate, and passed out of the little side door.

His dog cart was there as on other mornings: Pietro, at the horses' heads, awaiting orders.

"Drive instantly, instantly, Pietro," shouted Maria. "There is not a moment to lose, and put your Master on the train."

Pietro, whipping the horses, flew along the Passeggiata.

Just in time for the train that was already whistling in the station. Just in time to enter the compartment marked "Venice." Then the door was banged, and the train drew away from Leghorn.

There he sat, a huddled heap, the blood from his bleeding lip smearing his chin and beard.

"Not you, Clara! Not you!"

Blood trickling over his shirt! O, God! Spurned. Kicked like a dog! Again her words rang in his ear: "Better dead than to live and know how vile her father is."

"Dead." Why had he not killed himself, there

at her feet? She might have pardoned, but the vision developed further; he saw Clara crushed under the inheritance of his infamy and shame. He started up, he gazed vacantly on the landscape rushing past.

The train was now running across the flat land beyond Pisa. Green fields of waving corn, glistened under the recent rain. A ploughman lighted his pipe, and the two yoked oxen puffed a cloud of white vapor in the damp still air.

It would be vain leaping from the window; the fall could hardly be mortal, help and recognition were too near at hand. If death meant respite from visions of Clara's contempt, the echo of Clara's words, her heel crushing his face, welcome death!

Presently the train would rush through dark tunnels; then a leap must be fatal and a mangled, unrecognizable body, crushed by the rolling train into fragments.

He stood before the window, he shuddered horribly, the damp air blowing on his cheek. He stood before the window; he strained every nerve, he stiffened every muscle, whipped his cowardly flesh with the lash of his will. Cold drops stood on his brow, he longed to jump—his feet were nailed to the floor.

Suddenly the train rushed into a flood of sunlight, Daniele's opportunity was gone!

The train crawled up the Apennines, and then it rushed into another tunnel. Now was the moment to jump in the darkness—his feet were still

fastened to the floor! Then again a glow of sunlight, then again all was smoke and noise and darkness. Now summon all his courage and jump! Impossible! His craven soul made of each foot a leaden mass which he could not lift.

In the many tunnels, the opportunity offered itself repeatedly, every circumstance was favorable, yet—yet Daniele dared not! This was his worst punishment; he was revealed to himself, craven in body as well as in soul. He longed for death. He could not kill himself!

Daniele writhed as the hours sped; he thought less of suicide. He tried to plan his escape. When at the Venice station he stepped into a gondola, every detail of his plan was made. The clock struck five. His heart sank, he had reckoned that the train would not be so late. The water entrance to the Sparnieri office was shut.

"Why have they shut?" he asked with trembling voice.

"Why? Because it's evening."

"I had forgotten. Then row me to Sant' Angelo. Land me at the stazzo."

Having knocked at the door of his head clerk. "Please, sir, my master is not at home. He left an hour ago, called to Leghorn."

Daniele's heart congealed. That sudden summon to Leghorn was a precaution taken against him.

"Row to the Banca d'Italia and make haste."

"Sorry to disappoint you, Signor Sparnieri, but the Signor Direttore and the cashier left immediately

after closing time. If there is anything I can do for you?"

"A mere trifle, Bepi, some ready cash."

"I'm very sorry, Signor Sparnieri, that the safe is closed. Early in the morning you can have all you like."

A few minutes later Daniele was once more in the train, but this time he was going to Bellune.

"Horses for Misurina, Signor Sparnieri? Of course I have them," said the burly hostler, "and as early as you please to-morrow they will be in harness for you."

"At once, Signore? Why, it is half past nine! The night is dark, and there is a storm brewing among the peaks. Look there, above Pieve di Cadore, what heavy clouds are gathered."

Was there no one in the stables, not a boy willing to earn a hundred franc note for the same trip that would bring him only as many soldi a few hours later?

"There's no one but Carlino dare try it. He is reckless, he knows every stone and every turning, but you must make it one hundred and fifty and the money left in my keeping. And I shall have to charge triple fare for the horses, there's no knowing what may happen," the hostler's face was grave. "You are tempting the devil."

Carlino drank one glass of brandy to give himself "heart"; cracked his whip and gave loose rein to the horses; the trees by the roadside whirled by and the wheels rattled merrily.

Away, away, along the narrow road, with the rush of the cold wind exciting both horse and man. Away! Away with the rising hope of passing the dangerous summit of Tre Croci, before the storm breaks in fury. Away Away! Amidst the dark shadows of trees overhanging the abyss on one hand and the steep wall of rock on the other. Daniele felt the threats of nature in his torment. Everything was dark, glowering around him, the thunder cracked and moaned among the reverberating echoes of the peaks, flashes of lightning roused the horses to redoubled speed. Far away down at the bottom of the valley, the Piave, swollen and torrential, rushed along its bed.

Suddenly with the clattering of a hail storm, the rain began to fall.

"We cannot do it, Signore," said the boy, with pale face and quivering lip. "In a few minutes the road will be so slippery that we may roll into the very bottom of hell."

"Try it, boy. Here is another hundred for you, and here is brandy."

Onward they darted. The horses stumbling at every step, the wheels sliding backward, while the pines around them groaned and twisted and gnarled their branches, as if pointing out the entrance to hell. Still Daniele urged the boy with money and drink.

Tre Croci at last! The climbing upward was over!

Here the horses could stop and pant for one brief

repose; here was the roadside inn, why not stop here until daybreak? Time enough to reach the frontier if he started at daybreak. Daniele was tempted; his weary limbs and more weary heart claimed respite.

But hark! amid the awful noise of tempest tossed elements, Daniele discerned a more frightful sound; his heart stood still. There in the distance, the gallop of a horse.

"On, boy, on! We're losing time here!"

Down hill now, by a narrow path which like a torrent carried loose stones and broken branches. The horses staggered, they stumbled, they slipped at every step, every turning seemed to open a gaping precipice under the wheels. Will they roll down? It will be a moment of pain—and then rest. O for rest!

"Gesu, Giuseppe e Maria!" uttered the boy-driver, rushing on to the final, most slippery descent, which a flash of white lightning had shown. An appalling crash of thunder and the reverberating echo was the only answer to his prayer.

Cracking his whip, the drunken boy blindly urged the horses into that last furious gallop. It was like rolling into a bottomless abyss. Daniele held on with shut eyes. Yes! this was the end! The welcome death which would bring peace to his craven heart!

Here amid reverberating thunder, howling blasts and crashing hail, here with a fathomless precipice gaping at the wheel, here with the certainty of death,

Daniele recovered his composure. His whole life unrolled before him. He saw it lucidly, critically; for the first time he saw its meanness and its crime. The glory past recalling, the blunders past mending, its sins past repenting, even Clara, was past mourning for! But death was at hand!

A shock, a jerk, the rearing of horses, a hoarse yell from Carlino.

"Here we are, Signore, as true as the Madonna! Here we are, though I can not believe it."

The next flash of lightning is mirrored in the lake, it illumines the glaciers, and reveals the gate leading up to Daniele's Palazzina.

"With your leave, Padrone, I will take these beasts to your stables. They have earned something better than to be kept out here in the rain," and Carlino drove on.

Daniele had his hand on the wooden bar of his own gate, he turned the bolt. Here was a home and a shelter. The howling wind held its breath in suspense, the thunder rolled on in distant rumble; a sense of appeasement stole over Daniele's overwrought brain.

Harken! Why did Daniele's trembling limbs again fail under him? Why did he blanch? Above the pattering of the rain and the rustle of foliage the sound of a galloping horse once more reached his ears and his heart feared. Galloping, galloping, the hoof beats pounded the road! Galloping, galloping; the rocks reverberated to the metallic sound.

Was it Fate on horseback, the Avenger, who drew near?

"Who may be galloping across the mountain pass at this hour of night, Carlino?"

"A most comfortable night, this, for a deserter to pass the frontier; black enough for smugglers, too."

By the light of the coach lamp Daniele looked at his watch. A quarter to three. He still had some hours to reprieve before daylight. Many things could be done in a few hours—if only he had a plan.

Inside the house, having lighted two candles, Daniele sat down and considered his situation. Three o'clock. If he could reach Toblach before five and take the Sudbahn train for Vienna, he might be there by noon.

Vienna and the Judengasse swarming with old chums and associates; unscrupulous antiquity dealers who have traded with him through many years, money lenders in greasy coats and gaping shoes, merchants who have conspired with him and shared unavowable profits. If only he can get within the refuge of the Ghetto he can laugh at the police. The pass-word of secrecy, the shiboloth, stronger than any bond of free masonry, would shield him from discovery in a place where even the toddling babe is taught to despise the Gohim and to shield the brethren.

"Baruch atah Adonai," devoutly uttered Daniele, recognizing a providential grace in this inspiration.

He warmed some water and searched his wardrobe. His beard was shaven off, his grey hair dyed

black and his complexion darken by a wash. He changed his clothes, he felt reassured; no detective would know him in the dark-haired alpinist in knickerbockers and leggings, tightly buttoned jacket and heavy boots, whose face was partly shaded under a slouched hat, whose hand held an iron shod alpenstock.

It was hard now, after this rest, to start out once more, hard to plunge into the gloom and darkness after this cheering light and shelter, harder for the ache in the weary limbs, and more weary heart, hardest of all for the craving of an empty stomach, but now a double spur urged him on; doubtless the carabinieri were already following him, and besides the fear of detection was gleaming the hope of a fresh start toward prosperity.

The storm was over, only a chill mountain breeze moaned among the fir trees. Far up in the east the white peaks were slowly appearing, assuming a brighter sheen against a sky that suggested the rosy hue of dawn. The road to Toblach was almost level and Daniele tramped along the path slippery and cut by deep ruts that shone under the streams of water.

But suddenly the cold drops started on his brow; someone was running after him!

This could not be a deserter; this was not the cautious footfall of a smuggler. Daniele ran! With stiff limbs and choking throat, he ran! He ran in the dark, careless of stumbling, slippery roads! He leaped over boulders! He ran!

The pursuing step gained steadily; nearer; still nearer; now he heard the creaking of pebbles. He almost felt a panting breath it was so near.

A whizzing, a blow in his side, and Daniele felt the rope tighten, his arms were pinioned to his chest, then he was fastened to a tree. His bonds tightened behind his back; he twisted his head, and in the dim light saw phosphorescent eyes staring at him under a dripping hat.

"You do not know me, Master Daniele? I'll introduce myself to your Signoria. I, Vigo, the man you betrayed when you persuaded him to marry your mistress; I'm the man you robbed of his wife. Now do you remember me?"

"How much do you want, Vigo?"

"How much? O, very little indeed—only your life, your wicked, useless life. But to me the greatest treasure in the world. I have been watching you days and days. I missed you once. But now! I have you!"

Vigo, glaring with passion, ground his teeth close to Daniele's face.

"I want no money but the agony of your soul when you are a carrion left to rot in this mountain pass! I might blow out your brains in a moment, but you are a fiend—you must be tortured like a fiend! You will die slowly, very slowly."

"Vigo! have pity!"

"Pity! Have you had pity for me? I will kill you by inches, I will have a pang for every pang you have inflicted. For each crime you must make a

bloody atonement! O, Cristo di Dio! This is my hour of vengeance!"

Daniele's head dropped on his breast.

"Have you nothing to say? Why do you not whine, dog?" Vigo smashed Daniele's face with his fist. "Shriek, craven! Weep, coward!"

Daniele's head drooped lower still.

"Damnation! He has fainted!"

Vigo unfastened the bonds and Daniele fell a corpse to the ground: Vigo shook him, but the limbs were inert, not a sound came. Vigo passed a match before the staring eyes, the open mouth, Daniele was dead.

"The robber! The thief! He has cheated me even of his death! He has died of fright!"

The prey he had fiercely pursued had slipped from his grasp. With a yell he flung himself on the clammy body. He shook the inert shoulders until the livid face, with its wide open horrified eyes, dangled piteously. Then he thrust his hands like claws into the matted hair, bringing the staring eyes full before his own, he pressed the lifeless ear close to his own mouth.

"Hear me, Daniele! Hear me curse you! See me spit on you! O villain! O murderer! Dog!"

With each word, his voice shrieked a shriller note! He insanely shook the human rag. Only inarticulate sounds, animal cries came from his convulsed throat.

The epileptic fit was upon him. His shrieks and yells, his convulsive movements ceased; his mouth

stiffened, his nerves grew tense, every muscle was strained like an iron band. His clenched teeth met through the dead man's flesh. When he rolled in the fit his fingers clutched Daniele's hair, with foaming mouth, and horrid shakings, he carried along in ghastly embrace, the body of his foe.

They rolled against broken rocks, torn by thorns; they rolled against trunks of trees, and pricking brambles, at last they rolled over the edge of the path. Senselessly, grotesquely, they tumbled from ledge to ledge, like two hideous puppets, until a projecting boulder stopped them in mid air and there they remained against the hard rock, a sombre mass of broken flesh, a ghastly sight of murder, and crime, and vengeance.

There they dangled in the rising breeze, in the growing light of day; the dazzling sunbeams and the pure mountain air.

A stately raven croaked a hoarse appeal, which brought a gloomy assembly of priest-like brethren.

With a flurried sweep a pure skylark darted upwards shrieking abhorrence. Chirping birds flew away with frightened flapping of wings, while from dark recesses of grass, from hollow trunks of dead trees, from under rotting autumnal leaves, from holes in the decaying soil, from under moss dripping boulders, from gloomy hiding places the black and crawling creatures that feed on carrion and gloat on putrefaction, came gliding or fleeting; flapping heavy wings, or creeping with slimy feet, towards the ghoulisn banquet spread.

The beetles in hieratic procession, the fussy little ants in serried files, the viscid worms, all swarmed and pressed under the stately presidency of the solemn ravens, that chuckled their hoarse dirge above, or stepped in grotesque majesty round the royal feast.

Higher rose the sun; then it declined behind the far glacier. A rushing wind from the north tossed the lifeless limbs, shook the limp clothes of the corpses, while dark and loathsome creatures feasted on horrid flesh. All day long with impartial greed, they devoured the flesh that had quivered with hatred, all day long with impartial lust, they drank the blood of hearts that had throbbed with murder; until in a sharper gust of wind the ghastly, grotesque embrace of the cadavers gave way, and the nerveless shapes tumbled down from the projecting boulder, slipped along loose earth, then rolled over slippery rocks and with distant horrid crash, both fell into the deep hollow at the bottom of the valley.

None but the disappointed ravens witnessed the fall, none but they croaked in distress or shrieked in grief over the bodies. Then the swollen torrent, dashing from the pure glaciers above, came sweeping over the carrions, and accomplishing the law of nature that abhors a loathsome spectacle, it thrust them under a rock in a cave below the mountain, and passed onwards to purify its waters by a joyful leap beyond the dark pass into the next valley.

CHAPTER XXVI

FROM cerulean sky flecked with white vaporous clouds the golden-sundust fell palpitating on wild blossoms luxuriating in the paths over which wild bees were droning; all nature was full of sunshine and joy, and yet some mystery of gloom hovered about the Villa D'Abbia, as seen through the iron railings that enclosed its grounds. The factory building in the rear, so recently resounding with the clang of machinery, was empty, silent and falling into ruin. The driveway in front of the house was choked by underbrush, growing weeds and untrimmed branches from adjacent trees; and was rutted by torrential winter rains. The motor car stopped and the noise of its engine ceased. Lanza, passing his hand between the bars, lifted the latch and opened the side gate.

"Better walk up to the house without warning," he said turning to Cavalier Panzini.

The Magistrate bowed acquiescence, and made way for Clara and Signora Beltrani to walk on, under Lanza's escort, while he lingered behind with doctor Calmi and questioned him about the invalid he had been delegated by the Florentine Procuratore del Re to examine.

"You have seen the official report bearing the

signatures of three celebrated specialists. "I entirely agree with it," said Calmi.

"My personal opinion? . . . That having committed all the excesses that a man can devise to destroy his health, D'Abbia has lasted much longer than could have been expected. He dies hard."

"There's not the slightest chance of recovery?"

"Not the slightest. When you see him you will judge for yourself. Even to physicians he is an impressive sight. He can neither stand, nor speak, nor swallow solid food. Last time I was here, the hemiplegia was already complete on the right side of his body, and even on the left side he was rapidly losing sensibility, and control of the muscles. He could make a few inarticulate sounds, and move one hand by sudden jerks."

"Always in his right mind though?"

Calmi hesitated, but professional honesty prevailed.

"Yes, as far as I know."

Pompous and solemn in his black coat and white whiskers, Cavalier Panzini regarded the Doctor, and made mental note of these assertions.

"You believe that this interrogatory is useless?"

"Perfectly useless . . . pure formalism, . . . he cannot speak."

"One can never be too scrupulous about an enquiry that must be reviewed by the Corte di Cassazione."

"I know . . . I know . . . Hair splitting is a favorite pastime with our senior Magistrates."

"Such enormous sums of money are involved in this affair that Magistrates are suspicious. Then that double disappearance is most unfortunate. You see if one or both the men had died, the bodies must have been discovered; if they had tried to pass the frontier they could not have escaped the net spread for them by your police."

"Yet Vigo after writing that denunciation . . ."

"If he ever wrote it."

"Do you think . . ."

"My dear Sir! It is not my business to think, but to enquire. But here is the house. How desolate it looks!"

Desolate indeed the villa, its closed windows covered by cobwebs and dust, its marble steps slippery and green with lichen growth, the dry fountain before the door covered with trailing creepers out of which a headless statue lifted its broken arms.

Lanza rang, obtained no answer, and pounding on the bronze knocker, brought a small boy, who stared at the party and then ran away.

"I understood that a staff of servants was kept here to attend on the invalid," said Panzini.

"So they are. The Signora Contessa has not only paid all her husband's debts but grants him an ample allowance for his maintenance here. I know this to be the fact though I cannot tell where all the money goes to."

"Maria has long hands, and Don Feliciano would sell his own mother in order to get money for his

church," said Signora Beltrani "People hereabouts say he has religious insanity."

After further ringing of the bell and pounding the knocker the door was partly opened by Giovanni.

"O Signora Contessa! Vostra Signoria must excuse me. We never expect visitors here," he bowed but did not make way for his mistress.

"How is your master, Giovanni?"

"As it pleases God!" ejaculated Giovanni, his eyes rolling.

"Show us up at once," ordered Lanza, pushing Giovanni aside and throwing open the door for the others to enter.

The closed shutters and dusty skylight dimly revealed its dilapidated condition.

All over the palace, the vandalism had stripped the walls of their costly arazzi, plundered the artistic ornaments and left only dust and rubbish, to bear witness to barbarian wreckage.

"Who has dared," growled Lanza.

"Master's orders. The bronze chandeliers and the wrought iron fittings were given by Reverendo Don Feliciano to the parish church; the hangings are in the chapel. This way, Signori, across the galleria. Reverendo now lives here and Master gives all his money to the church for masses."

Giovanni opened the door of Augusto's room, then stole away.

All stopped amazed at the spectacle.

The room was arranged as a private chapel, dimly lighted by a high stained glass window. In front of

them a brightly illuminated altar, and on its steps a priest and choir boy were performing the rites of low Mass. Balanced in the boy's hand the incense burner tinkled and sent up clouds of perfumed smoke into the quivering candle light. Above the embroidered chasuble the priest's ascetic face rose imperious, solemn, and hieratic as he turned on the visitors deep sunk eyes, the eyes of an insane person.

A woman's figure was prostrate at the foot of the altar. On one side, in the shadow of the curtains, a huge square panel of wood loomed indistinctly.

"*Ite missa est*" chanted the priest as with raised hand he traced the sign of the Cross. Slowly those strange eyes reached round the room, they ignored the intrusion at the door, but rested long on the woman's uplifted face, then passed on to the square panel by her side. Then after a final genuflection to the altar the priest waved his hand, and the double curtain falling shut out the vision.

Maria rose and silently faced the visitors.

Cavalier Panzini stepped from the group:

"I am the Magistrate, delegated to see and to interrogate your charge; will you lead us to him?"

Maria surveyed the group until she discovered her mistress behind Signora Beltrani, then with curling lips, she laid her hand on the panel by her side, and turned it round. It was an invalid's chair.

"Gesu! Giuseppe! Maria!" ejaculated Signora, gasping.

Not a human figure but a limp mass of flesh, of distorted limbs propped by pillows, was discovered

inside the chair. A hideous head bobbed helplessly, revealing with each jerk an added horror. Below the bald yellow brow stared a single half closed eye, and a slobbering mouth restlessly munched and twitched.

"The other witnesses have all testified. Just put the usual questions to Maria Vighi" said Panzini.

"Shall we say wife, or widow of Vigo Vighi?" queried the clerk, pen in hand.

"Wife by all means. There is no evidence of Vigo's death," replied Panzini.

Clara, trembling, walked nearer the wheeled chair, she bent over Augusto and spoke in low pitying tones.

"I am sorry for you. I wish I could do something for you."

From beneath the matterated eyelid shot such a look of hatred that she recoiled.

Some more scribbling of the clerk's pen, then Panzini advanced near Augusto's chair.

"Can you answer my questions?"

The palsied shaking of the head ceased and it nodded.

"I see you understand my words. Now, Conte, try and collect your remembrances of that which happened at your villa on the first of May. You were standing by the open window of your dining room; did you notice anyone crossing the lighted space in front of you?"

The death-mask shook, D'Abbia's hand moved in

jerks, his jaw dropped, there was a hoarse gurgle in his throat.

"Do you remember on that eventful night having seen the man Vigo?"

Augusto's head moved from right to left in denial.

The slobbering mouth stiffened, then a hoarse voice pronounced "No."

"Clerk, put that answer down."

"Do you remember seeing the man you knew under the name of Deleani?"

"Yes" uttered the cavernous voice.

"Did you see him in the garden?"

"Yes."

"Just before the explosion of the shell?"

Lanza stepped forward with pale face and quivering voice.

"I protest against such evidence. The man has not been sworn."

"Will you be sworn, Conte?"

After regarding Maria, who nodded assent, the lips whispered, "Yes."

Clara bent and looked into his face. "Augusto. Augusto dare you repeat that lie? I once trusted you. I trusted in your honor . . ."

"You must not influence the witness," said Panzini.

But Clara did not move, she held him under the spell of her eye and as he looked up something seemed to awake in that clouded soul. He looked and gasped, he looked and moaned piteously, a tear

rolled from his half closed eye, and with a feeble movement of his hand he beckoned to Panzini.

But Maria came on the other side of him; she laid her hand warningly on his shoulder, and with the other she pointed to the curtains that slowly opened, and once more revealed the altar.

The priest was there and in his hands the jewelled pyx that shone in the reverberated light of candles like a living fire.

"Il Santissimo," breathed Maria in an awed whisper.

Panzini reverently bent his knee then solemnly he pronounced the formula of the oath:

"Do you swear on your honor and conscience, in the presence of the Holy Sacrament, to speak the truth, only the truth, and the whole truth?"

Maria laid her hand on the chair and wheeled it away from Clara even as Augusto was striving to look towards her.

Above the glittering pyx, the eyes of the priest glowered with the light of hell on Augusto; they commanded imperiously. The patient moaned, writhed in agony, then with a horrible rattling in his throat,—

A cry rang out! "Oh Augusto, Augusto, I never wronged you, yet you have destroyed my life. As you hope for mercy in that awful hour, add not the sin of perjury as you go to meet your God."

Clara fell senseless at Augusto's feet. Augusto gazed at the form of his wife, with fixed eyes, he gazed. In the tense stillness the passing seconds

seemed hours. And then, was it the spark of goodness that will linger even in the most depraved heart? Was it remorse for his many sins against Clara? Was it craven fear to die with perjury on his lips? Was it that the man loved Clara in his way, and sought to make some amends in this last fatal hour? Or was it a miracle of divine pity, that could not permit the consummation of so monstrous a crime? A look of pity, almost of gentleness, came into that face so marred by sin.

Gazing down at the prostrate form of his wife, quietly, clearly, the words came,

"I hated Memmo because my wife loved him, but he is innocent. I swear that I saw Vigo throw the bomb." With the last word the mysterious power which had sustained him vanished; with a sigh he sank back into the chair a corpse.

From the hands of the priest the jewelled pyx fell with a crash at the feet of Maria. With transfixed eyes she gazed on the emblem of the Crucified. In her trance Rosita appeared, the eyes of the child piercing her with accusation. Slowly she knelt before the pyx, slowly her arm extended, her finger touched the sacred tabernacle. As if in hypnotic trance, she cried,

"Rosita, Rosita, figlia mea, figlia mea, pierce not my heart with your eyes. To save your soul I will tell the truth. Vigo threw the bomb, that he might kill Master Daniele, your father."

CHAPTER XXVII

ON the dazzling white walls through the high shutterless barred window, the sun streamed pitilessly. Early in the morning it began shining on the ceiling in front of his pallet, then the square of light became more intense and stretched down to the wall where, it lengthened into one huge column of white fire. A swarm of golden bees began to reel within his eyes, his brain was scorched and his body felt light like the surrounding air. And Memmo thought of the eternity of days and weeks and years of this torture yet to be endured. He contrasted them with the days and weeks and years he had thought to pass with Clara. Oh, if only his heart would break!

Each morning he watched the first streak of light with the same trembling dread; heard the clang of the accursed bell, rolled up his bedding, and rose with his stiffened muscles and swung his pallet into its niche in the wall, then quickly placed the bucket near the door. Else the accumulated offal was left there until the following morning, and the effluvia of decomposition was added to the buzzing of lewd flies and mosquitoes, and the daylong scorching and dazzling sunlight on white ceiling and wall. Once more the wicket opened and the guardian handed

through it a loaf of sodden bread and a pewter pot containing a soup of mouldy beans.

This wicket and its shutter pierced with spy-holes was Memmo's greatest torment. Nor for one instant could he forget the invisible eye that noted his every movement, every look, seemed to read his every thought. Even when crouched in the furthest corner of his cell his face turned to the wall, his back to the wicket, his face buried in his hands, he still felt from behind that screen of iron bars and pierced wood the invisible eye which pierced his brain, searched his soul and sullied even his most sacred thought of Clara.

There crouching beast-like in a corner he took his meals; there, book open on his knee, he read and re-read the pages striving vainly to reconstruct a new meaning out of the familiar sentences. He ate little. He courted drowsiness, as a partial escape from this hideous nightmare.

But sometimes memory would start into sudden irruption. How sweetly scented and clear had been that wonderful evening as he had gone to Villa D'Abbia to meet his beloved. How his heart had leaped as the door into the Conservatory opened and Clara had rushed into his arms. The rapture he felt at her tones of love, every word a caress. Their embraces. His dreams of the nest of the Romito where they were to spend the rapturous days in sweet communion. That last sight of her dear brave tear-stained face. Those last words,

"Not good-bye, Memmo, but until we meet again."

Meet again! Meet again! They would never meet again. Never.

The terrible phrase emerged and finally drove out everything else. He and Clara would never meet again. Never. The sentence of the Court Martial had undoubtedly been confirmed. He accepted the decree of fate. This was final. Clara would never be to him more than a memory. Death for him had already begun.

Something must have been snapped in his brain. Memmo knew that many wretches shut in as he was finally became imbeciles; that many others were carried out of these cells with bound hands and feet to be despatched to the criminal insane asylums. He knew that the more cultivated the mind the more complex and delicate the mental machinery, the more easy its breakdown, and his whole frame quivered with fear.

This very terror of his, this absolute loss of all hope was a symptom of insanity?

Sleep was banished; even on the hottest nights he shivered and tossed with cold alternating with burning. His only consolation came from the raging storms. The shrieking and howling of the raging elements voiced his agony; the roar of the breakers and the hail scourged rain echoed his superhuman wrath and brought companionship in suffering.

Sometimes he seemed to hear human groans mingled with the clash and roar of the elements and the shriek of the winds like the cry of a lost soul

and the crash of thunder echoed like a rifle volley over this land of hatred.

Once, this ghastly imagination became tragic reality; the bark of a rifle was followed by a shriek of terror and a long moan. Above the wind, and the rain through all the long night, the moaning had lasted; even when the storm abated, this pleading voice had reached his ear where he stood grasping with benumbed hands the iron bars, feeling his hair stand on end with horror as he understood the awful drama; the attempted escape, the deadly shot, and now agony.

* * * * *

Spring had come unnoticed by Memmo, and brought one regulation hour of free air twice a week. The prisoner was marched between two armed guardians, along a winding passage into the adjoining walled in open space, which had once been the tiny garden of some peaceful friar. Not one blade of grass had outlived the tramping of weary footsteps, but still this airing was a diversion.

There was the opportunity of glancing at two human faces, of hearing human voices. Then, half way down the passage, there was a small oval opening, double barred and grated, that looked out on the hill slope, facing the mainland. Sometimes Memmo's attendants allowed him to stop for a moment in front of it, and those few instants soon became the one comfort of his life. Perhaps at that very moment, when he gazed on this strip of landscape, Clara's eyes too were fixed upon it with the

same despairing tenderness. Memmo's spirit consented to live and endure. For a moment hope revived. One year had rolled round and soon he would be allowed to receive and to write one letter.

Then as the days crawled slowly on and no letter came, he seemed consumed by a fire in his bones. Was Clara dead?

"Look here No. 33. This here letter has been some time in my coat pocket. It turned up this morning," as he spoke the guard handed him a soiled and crumpled open envelope.

With trembling fingers Memmo held Clara's letter to the light. Then with a groan he hammered the solid wooden shutter with his fist!

The light delicate handwriting was almost obliterated by thick streaks of black ink, impressed by the censors of the prison correspondence, the unclean and rain-soaked pocket of the jailor had so blotted and enlarged the original ink streaks that only a few words were legible out of the four little regulation pages in which Clara had crammed the overflowing love of her heart, and told of her hope that he would soon be free.

All day Memmo tried in vain to read one complete sentence, and then he threw himself heart-broken on the floor. Some days later he was given one sheet of paper on which to write his answer. Most of the page was covered by the regulations limiting the correspondence of prisoners. They warned him of all the punishments that awaited him if he infringed them, and alas! they would reveal

to Clara his terrible condition. Memmo was stunned. He stared at his hideous page with fevered brain until he dropped senseless across the table.

Next day he tried again. But the more he strove to collect his thoughts, the greater became his confusion. He was no longer able to compose coherent sentences. Solitary confinement had already begun to destroy his intellect. But one year of his sentence of solitary confinement had elapsed. He was appalled; if he lacked words now for his thoughts, what would be his condition after a few years more of seclusion? His was the destruction of an intellect in decomposition, drifting into imbecility. When Clara should meet him, he would no longer be able to recognize her. With the realization of this fate, all hope died within him, and Memmo's health failed rapidly.

A day came when Memmo did not hear the bell and when he made no response to the call of the warder through the wicket. He moaned and tossed on his pallet in delirium.

Doctor Baldi's wooden leg came thumping heavily along the passage and while the guardian opened the cell door, the doctor called out: "Number 33 you are reported to be feverish. Now if it's shamming, it won't go with me. Let me feel this pulse."

But when Doctor Baldi held Memmo's pulse under his finger, when he looked down into that emaciated face, flushed with typhoid fever, he growled to the guardian:

"Why this is a very serious case! You should

have reported him sooner. Now there's nothing for him but the *infermeria* even at the risk . . ."

The two men exchanged glances, and the doctor sighed.

"Two of you must carry him."

Thus Memmo was carried into the third bed of the close, low ceiled room and he was laid, unconscious and delirious, between an old blasphemous brigand, whose leg had been amputated, and a young murderer in the last stage of consumption.

With every passing day Doctor Baldi was more hopeless about Memmo. Each time that he came to his bedside, he looked more grave and shook his head with more genuine concern. He would linger near Memmo's bed, he would smooth his pillow and arrange his bed clothes and once when his eyes seemed to entreat, he bent over the bed and whispered:

"Is there anything you want me to do for you? Now . . . or after?"

Memmo's parched lips smiled, he glanced up and breathed slowly "Yes, . . . after . . . write to Lanza."

Even in this supreme moment he would not mention Clara's name, he would not have their sacred love discussed by common men.

The intervals of lucidity grew shorter and the drowsiness and torpor deeper. The objects around Memmo were but dimly visible, across a veil of mist that sometimes floated hazy and transparent, sometimes thickened and seemed to enfold him in its cold

heavy wreaths. But when the period of delirium set in his spirit was rapt in joyful visions. Then a figure of dazzling whiteness came and bent over him, and smiled on him; then he basked in Clara's presence, as in an infinite ocean of joy. He felt the softness of her arms round his neck, the sweet aroma of her breath on his cheek, he saw her radiant with the beauty, throbbing with the affection that had beamed on him in that blessed May morning and he heard that silvery voice "Memmo my Love! my Love! We meet now never to part again!"

And this was the vision of a dying man? This was the promise which divine tenderness gave to a noble heart that had been cruelly and unjustly punished, that had preferred a living death in a horrible prison, rather than freedom purchased at the cost of the reputation of the woman he loved; rather than that the breath of scandal should soil the white plumage of the angel he worshipped? And so he had been given this vision of the union of his soul with his soul-mate in the eternity of the spirit-world beyond the grave?

Ah! It was more than the vision of a dying man. It was Clara that opened the door of the *infermeria*. In the hushed silence it was a real voice that rang like a clarion, joyful and thrilling. Clear and thrilling it pierced even the ears of the man whose spirit was already hovering, preparing to take its flight from the mortal body. To Memmo it sounded as it had sounded once before in his ear under the perfumed foliage of the Conservatory.

"Memmo, my Love! My Love! We meet never to part again!"

She kneeled beside his cot, her face, her face illumined, close to Memmo's face. From her soul to the soul of Memmo passed such streams of love; from her body passed such streams of life; that Memmo could not die.

The delirium of the fever had passed; almost too weak to breathe, with the angel of death waiting to carry away his tired spirit, to Memmo came the consciousness that Clara's arms were around him, that Clara's face was pressed against his face, and that Clara was whispering to him:

"You will not die! You cannot die!"

And a peace as if Heaven came into his soul, and into his body life; life. And he knew that he could not die.

* * * * *

Like an immense bloody host the sun paused on the horizon, then plunged into the western sea. A white yacht emerged from the little island harbour. Behind the ship the enveloping darkness sucked in the sombre mass of Capraia, as the vessel's prow turned toward the mainland, toward the creek under the Romito, which Clara had secured as their future home. The island prison was obliterated from sense and from sight, as if a merciful God had removed from this fair earth a habitation of such misery and sin and woe. Stillness weighed on sea and land, darkness like a pall shrouded the world. The yacht slowly came up to the wharf and made fast. Strong

and gentle hands carried the litter on which Memmo lay, through the doors of the Romito and up to the room which he had chosen so long before as a nest for his beloved. Bendolfi and Lanza and Calmi walked beside the litter and every moment Clara held the hand of her lover. At the door they were met by Feltri who had made all arrangements at the villa.

How the dying disposition of Augusto and the confession of Maria, secured the new trial. How the immense rewards offered by Clara and the pressure which Feltri was able to bring on the Government aroused the police to supreme efforts, all this was told to Memmo as he grew stronger. Through Pietro who had driven him to the station and seen him take the train for Venice, through Bepi the clerk at the Banca d'Italia in Venice, through the hostler at Belluno and Carlino who had driven him, Daniele was traced to Misurena. In the villa were found the evidences of his disguise and the clothes he had worn when Clara had last seen him.

Vigo too was traced. When intoxicated in a moment of anger he had boasted that he would kill Daniele. Carlino told of Daniele's terror at sound of the pursuing horsemen, on the road to Misurena. On the road to Toblach the rope which had fastened Daniele was found at the foot of the tree, on the ledge to which the corpses had fallen was found Vigo's knife and cap, and a signet ring of Daniele's and finally, under the rock where they had been carried by the torrent, the remains of the two cad-

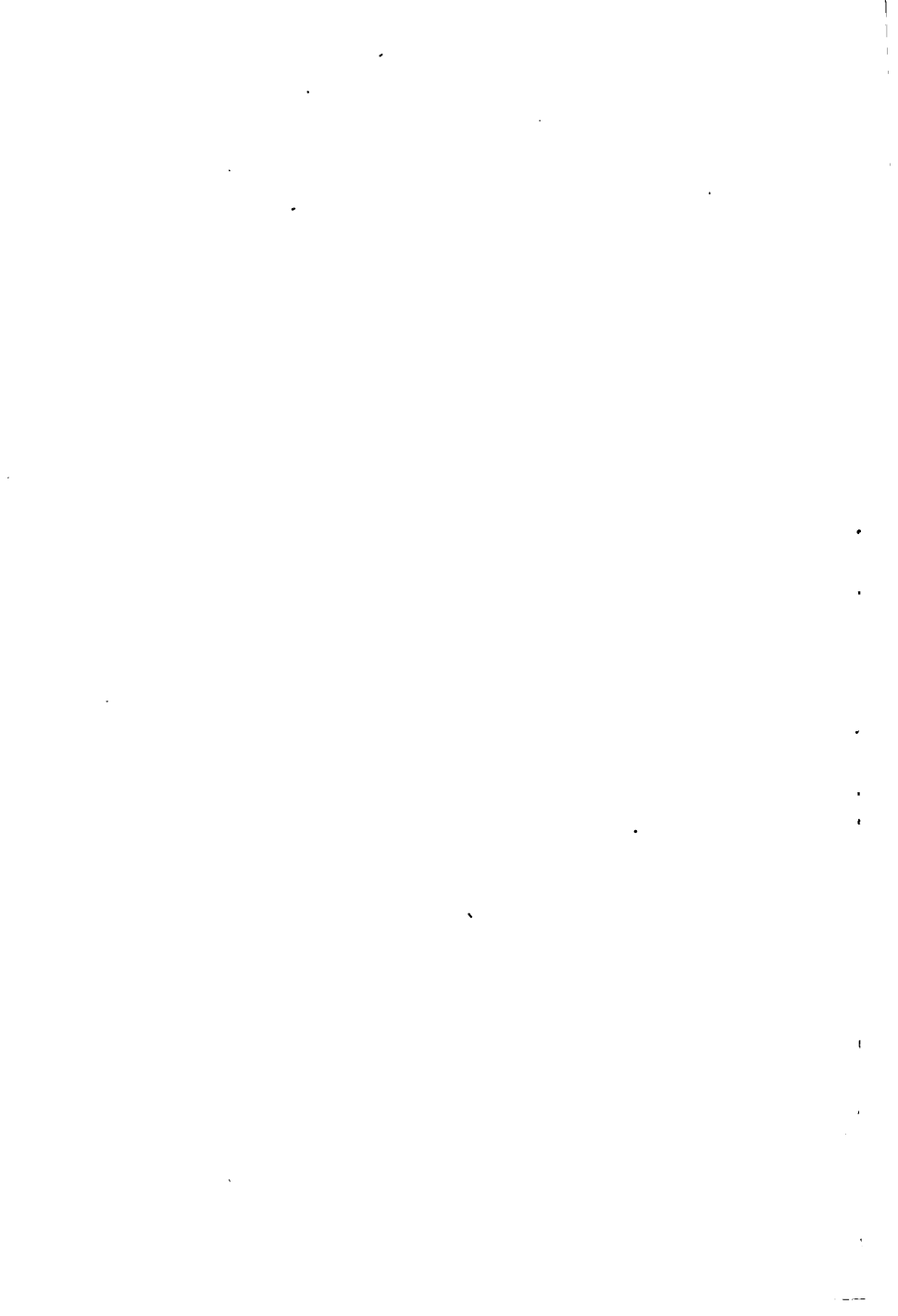
avers were discovered; and thus was the end of the tragedy revealed.

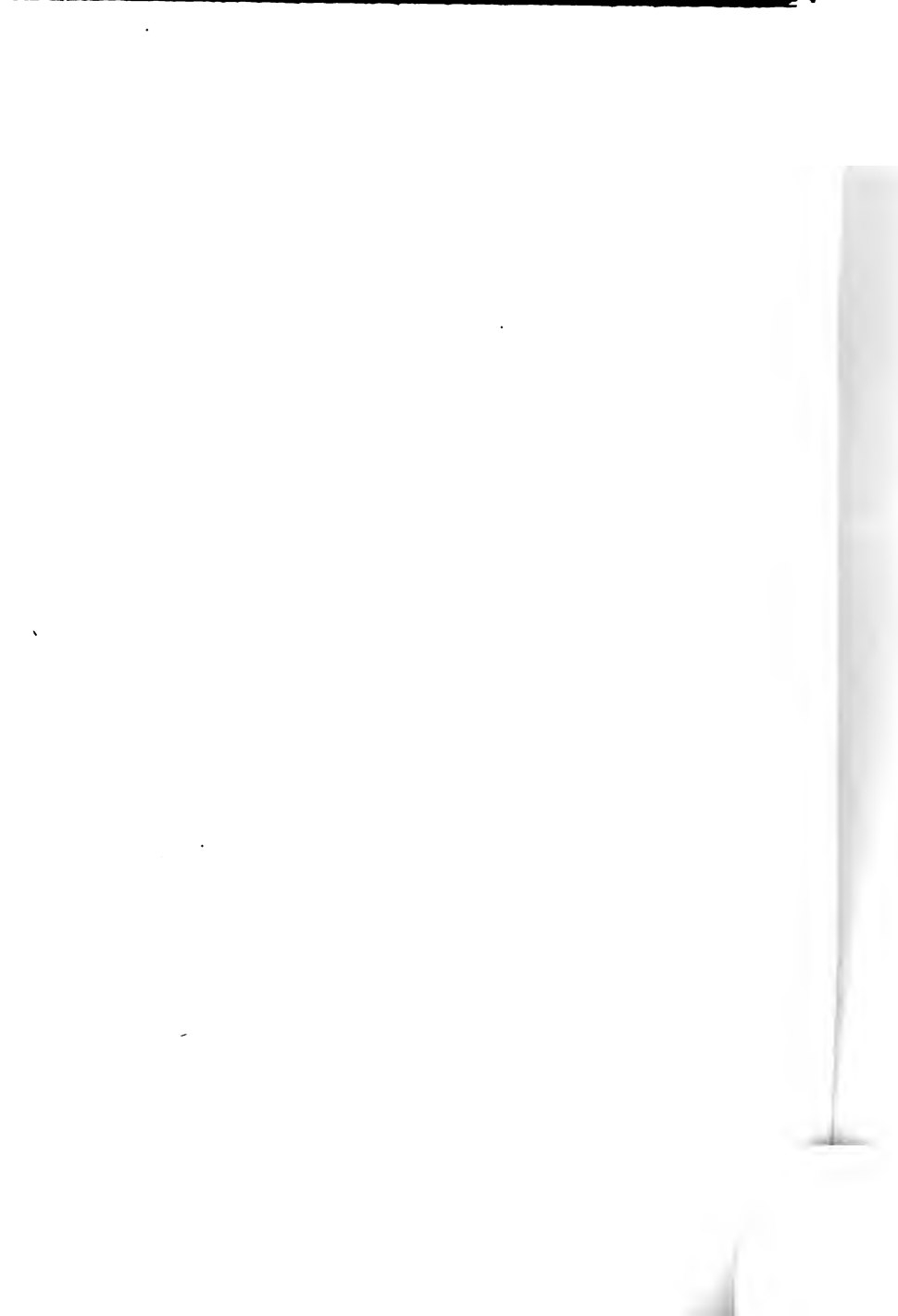
All this was brought out at the trial. Clara, scorning the comment from which Memmo had tried to preserve her, testified that Memmo was with her at the time when the bomb was exploded. Renza showed to the Court the letter Clara had written to Memmo making the appointment. When the Court had pronounced Memmo not guilty and ordered him set free, Feltri had secured permission from the Government for Clara to go to Capraia and to bring him back with her on the yacht, as soon as it was safe to move him.

Only Lanza and Bendolfi and Calmi, Signorina and Renza and Nanni were present at the wedding. With an instinctive feeling of delicacy they soon took their departure. Clara and Memmo, husband and wife, were alone together. There are sacred moments which pen cannot describe; there are emotions which are beyond words. Clara and Memmo as husband and wife for the first time were alone together. And so we will leave them, and going out close the door softly.

THE END.

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